This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Esmond - When We Were Twenty-one

23497
65.6.7

23497.65.6.7

Harvard College Library
THE GIFT OF
ROBERT GOULD SHAW
CLASS OF 1869

WHEN WE WERE TWENTY-ONE

by

H. V. ESMOND

FRENCH'S STANDARD LIBRARY EDITION

WHEN WE WERE TWENTY-ONE

Comedy in Four Acts

BY

H. V. ESMOND

COPYRIGHT, 1903, BY SAMUEL FRENCH

CAUTION:—Amateurs are hereby notified that this play is fully copyrighted under the existing laws of the United States Government, and they are not allowed to produce this play without first having obtained permission from SAMUEL FRENCH.

NEW YORK
SAMUEL FRENCH
PUBLISHER
28-30 WEST 38TH STREET

LONDON
SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD.
26 SOUTHAMPTON STREET,
STRAND

97.65.6.7
HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
GIFT OF
ROBERT GOULD SHAW
APR 28 1926

WHEN WE WERE TWENTY-ONE.

Performed at the Comedy Theatre, London, Sept. 2, 1901.

CHARACTERS.

RICHARD CAREWE.....Mr. Nat Goodwin
SIR HORACE PLUMELY, BART. (commonly called WADDLES).....Mr. Neil O'Brien
COLONEL MILES GRAHAME (the Soldier Man).....
Mr. J. R. Crawford
TERRENCE MCGRATH (the Doctor).....Mr. F. H. Tyler
RICHARD TERRENCE MILES AUDAINE (the Imp.).....
Mr. Arnold Daly
HERBERT CORRIE.....Mr. Fred Tiden
DAVID HIRSCH.....Mr. Bassett Roe
HUGHIE HELMONT.....Mr. Ernest Lawford
WALLIS BRUNDALLL.....Mr. Ivo Dawson
MRS. ERICSON.....Miss Ingram
PHYLLIS (her daughter.....Miss Maxine Elliott
KARA GLYNESK (known as the Firefly).....
Miss Constance Collier
BUDGIE CULPEPPER.....
BABETTE (Kara's Maid).....

WHEN WE WERE TWENTY-ONE.

ACT I.

SCENE.—DICK CAREW'S *room in his flat in Clement's Inn. A man's room. Old-fashioned, comfortable chairs, with the leather well-worn. On the* R. *side of the room a big fire-place with fender seat all round it. The wall is nearly entirely book-cases. The hangings are dark red. The over-mantel is old black oak, also the old-fashioned bureau, which is down* L. *against the wall. There is a deep, comfortable Chesterfield sofa above the fire-place, and a comfortable arm-chair below it, facing up stage. There is a door down* R. *of the fire-place, and a door* L. C. *at back, which opens into the hall—showing the hall—hat-racks, coats, etc., and the hall door, which opens on to the staircase of the building. There is a large window opposite the fire-place with a very crooked blind. A card-table is set out between the window and the fire-place, a little* L. *of the centre, below it is a smaller table, with a half-empty, old-fashioned whiskey decanter, five glasses, and numerous syphons of soda-water —both on and under the table. Various ash-trays, pipes, and cigar-ends about—also packs of cards. The room has evidently just been the scene of a card party. The door is open that leads to the hall, and through it comes the sound of men's voices and laughter. A moment after the curtain rises,* MRS. ERICSON *comes in from the door, down* R. *She is a sweet-looking, fragile old lady. She gives a little ejaculation of dismay.*

MRS. E. Oh, my dear—the smoke. Phyllis, dearie, come and help me to open the window.

(PHYLLIS *enters after her mother, and is likewise a little dismayed at the disorder of the room.*)

PHYLL. They *are* having a party, aren't they? Foo! the heat!

MRS. E. Dick would have a fire—and it's June!

PHYLL. (*has helped to open the window and is now trying to straighten the blind*) Dick says a "card-party" wouldn't be anything without a fire. What is the matter with this beastly old blind—it *will* keep crooked?

MRS. E. (*nervously*) My dear—there's something burning.

PHYLL. (*turning excitedly*) Oh, look about—look about, it's Dick's cigar end for a certainty.

(*The two women commence to hunt*)

Here it is—on the oak, *of* course. He is a careless old thing, isn't he? He'd be burnt down regularly if I wasn't here to look after him He dropped one into the drawing-room piano yesterday, and we didn't find it out for a quarter of an hour, and then we couldn't get at it, so we had to spill milk down to put it out, and that isn't the best thing for a piano.

(*The hall-door bell rings, and as* MRS. ERICSON *is close to it, she opens it and—*)

MRS. E. Oh, Mr. Corrie, it's you.

HERBERT. (*a frank, cheerful youth*) Hallo, Mrs. Ericson, Dick sent down to me about an hour ago, to know if I had any cards. I was out, but I got his message when I came in just now, and thought I'd bring 'em up myself. How are you? (*smiling at* PHYLLIS) One pack's nearly new, the two others aren't quite, and in fact, I don't think any of 'em are perfect. What does this sudden burst of dissipation mean?

PHYLL. (*gravely*) One of the Trinity has got a birthday.

HERBERT. (*with due solemnity*) Ohoh! Which one?

PHYLL. Sir Horace. The little fat one.

HERBERT. Is that the one they call "Waddles"?

PHYLL. Yes.

MRS. E. I do hope that little bed in the box-room will hold him.

PHYLL. Of course it will hold him, mother—he's not so very fat. He's "just comfortable."

HERBERT. He's staying here?

PHYLL. Dick's putting him up for the night, otherwise he'd have had to go early to catch the last train, and as it's *his* birthday, of course that wouldn't have done at all.

HERBERT. (*fanning himself*) I say—you're awfully hot in here.

PHYLL. Dick *would* have a fire.

HERBERT. Where's the Imp?

PHYLL. Oh, the Imp's gone out to have a quiet evening of his own. He's too young to stand the shock of such a revel as this party.

HERBERT. (*chuckles*) H'm! It strikes me that the Imp isn't quite as young as he looks. Oh, I beg your pardon, Miss Ericson.

PHYLL. Not at all.

HERBERT. Somehow it's difficult to think of the Imp as an engaged man.

PHYLL. It is very difficult, isn't it?

HERBERT. He's a jolly lucky chap—oh, I beg pardon, I didn't mean that.

PHYLL. Oh, I hope you did, because I quite agree with you.

HERBERT. That's a spiffing dog-cart Dick's given him.

MRS. E. (*turning round aghast*) What?

PHYLL. Dog-cart!

HERBERT. Oh! Didn't you know—er—well, p'raps it was a hired one—only—well—he did rather lead me to suppose that he was its sole proprietor.

(*Sound of pushing back chairs comes mingled with the chatter from the adjoining room.*)

Hallo! I must get.

MRS. E. Stop and see Dick.

HERBERT. Not I—when four old veterans like that get together and have a birthday, they don't want any extraneous juveniles knocking about—give him the cards. I hope the packs are perfect, but I doubt it.

MRS. E. Oh, I don't think it'll matter one or two being gone, nothing ever seems to matter much to Dick.

(HERBERT *laughs, and with a cheery "Good-night" goes out, not closing the hall-door after him.*)

PHYLL. (*gravely*) That's funny about Imp and the dog-cart. I wonder, does Dick know?

MRS. E. I don't expect he knows half that young man is up to behind his back.

PHYLL. (*gravely*) Mother, you mustn't say disrespectful things about the Imp, he's my future husband!

MRS. E. Yes, dear, I know he is—bother the boy! He's left the door open. (*she goes to the outer door, her eye falls on something by the mat*) Goodness! (*she stops and picks up a key*) The latch-key—now who put that under the mat? (*a pause*) Are any of the servants out at this hour? No, they're not. I saw them go to bed ages ago.

PHYLL. I put it there, mother. It's all right—oh, don't look amazed. The Imp asked me to—he's likely to be a little late and he's mislaid his own.

MRS. E. (*puzzled*) But he's gone to his aunt's at——

PHYLL. (*with a little laugh*) Oh, no, he hasn't.

MRS. E. But——

PHYLL. Mother dear, don't be old-fashioned. The Imp isn't a child—he can go to a Music-hall if he likes. Another dirty old damp cigar. (*looking at cigar*) It's Dick's—he chews his ends.

MRS. E. But—Oh, Dick thinks he's gone to his aunt's, and it seems almost like deceiving him.

PHYLL. If the Imp deceives Dick—Dick's only got himself to blame. I think Dick makes himself very ridiculous about the Imp. I don't deceive Dick. I merely push a silly little latch-key under a very dirty mat, that's all. Mother dear, if anybody saw you glaring at me like that, they'd be bound to think I was a monstrosity out of a show. Smooth your face out, and come to bed, there's a dear.

MRS. E. Phyllis, I really don't believe I shall ever be able to understand you.

PHYLL. That's because of the difference in our ages —you're so very young, and I'm so very old.

MRS. E. (*feebly*) Why are you?

PHYLL. (*with a laugh*) Because, if I'm going to be married to the Imp, I shall need to know a great deal.

MRS. E. It's very upsetting.

PHYLL. What is?

MRS. E. Oh, everything. I'm sometimes tempted to think—you won't marry him at all.

PHYLL. I will. I said I would, and everybody was pleased, and so I suppose I was—fearfully—pleased. After all, nothing matters as long as other people are pleased, does it?

MRS. E. It's very nice to please others, if it doesn't worry one.

PHYLL. Well, now could it worry one to be married to such an ideal husband as the Imp?

MRS. E. I suppose not.

PHYLL. (*suddenly*) Come along, mother dear, they're coming. We don't want to be convicted of keeping them tidy.

(*She puts her arm round her mother and hurries her off. The door is flung open, and amid a general babble,* WADDLES *and the* SOLDIER-MAN *stalk in arm-in-arm. The* SOLDIER-MAN *is smoking a large cigar and* WADDLES *is carrying a drink.* WADDLES, *otherwise known as* SIR HORACE PLUMELY, *is a little, round, cherubic man of about 45. The* SOLDIER-MAN, *otherwise known as* COLONEL MILES GRAHAME, *is very tall—very military, bronzed and handsome, a suspicion of grey in his hair.*)

WADDLES. (*with a sigh of content*) Oh, good gracious me—we're having a splendid evening.

S. MAN. It's a very impressive sight to watch you over a dish of plover's eggs, Waddles.

WADDLES. Can't resist 'em—never could—there's something in their shape that appeals to me.

(*The* DOCTOR, *a well set up, genial Irishman of about five and forty, enters with a small spirit-lamp in his hand—lighting his cigar and speaking through the puffs.*)

DOCTOR. Will ye believe it, boys—wid all my flow of eloquence, I can't persuade Master Dick that it's his duty to marry the old lady. What's to be done about it at all—at all?

(DICK *enters laden with cigars and cigarette boxes.*)

DICK. Lazy demons. Leave me to carry everything, as usual.

WADDLES. You're the host—I'm the guest of honour—it's your duty, all of you, to wait on me. Soldier-Man, fetch me more plover's egggs.

S. MAN. Daren't; you'd burst, and I'd be called to the inquest.

DICK. Oh, dear, oh, dear, I haven't laughed as much for years as I have this evening.

DOCTOR. If you'd only propose to the old lady——

DICK. Shut up, or I'll— (*throws cushion at him*)

S. MAN. (*gravely*) Really, ye know, this fire's a damn nuisance.

DOCTOR. It is that. Couldn't ye put it out somehow, Dick?

DICK. (*ruefully staring at it*) It was such a devil of a job to put it *in*.

WADDLES. (*fanning himself*) I must own, I really have felt it a *little* oppressive once or twice.

DICK. (*hopefully*) I vote we don't notice it; it'll be all right then.

S. MAN. Theoretically it may be all right—but practically—phew!

DICK. Let's take our coats off. (*then with a chuckle to the* SOLDIER-MAN) Do you remember the night we took our coats off in Princes' Street, Edinburgh?

S. MAN. Rather. By Gad, what a pasting you gave the brute, Dickie!

DOCTOR. (*with a note of solemn admiration in his voice*) Ah—it's a beautiful fighter ye were in those days, Masther Dick.

(DICK *chuckles.*)

WADDLES. (*sparring at the* DOCTOR) I was a bit useful if I was pushed, wasn't I, Miles?

DOCTOR. Ye were so—but, thank the Lord—ye weren't often pushed.

WADDLES. D'ye remember the day that by my superior agility and address I compelled you to apologise on one knee for winking at my best girl behind my back?

DOCTOR. I have never yet managed to remember what never happened.

DICK. Come, boys. The cards are getting cold.

WADDLES. (*rising quickly and going to table*) That's right! What I say is—is this a card-party, or is it isn't?

DOCTOR. Come along, then.

WADDLES. My luck must turn. I've lost pounds and pounds.

S. MAN. You don't look it, Waddles.

DICK. Leave my little friend's figure alone—who insults him, insults me—Hello! (*then turning with a chuckle to* WADDLES) D'ye remember that night in the Rue Mont Pamane, we upset the claret over one pack of cards—and then sent down to the room underneath——

WADDLES. (*chuckling*) I know, the room with the red blinds.

S. MAN. Ha! Always drawn.

DICK. Yes—and—d'ye remember the message that came back—and then we went down ourselves—we three.

WADDLES. Me first.

DICK. Yes, and I was next, and slipped over those infernal tins.

S. MAN. Gads, yes, I remember.

DICK. And how all the giggling stopped dead when we opened the door.

S. MAN. By George, yes!

(*And all the men sit back, their faces beaming with the memories of that night so long ago. There is a pause.*)

WADDLES. (*breaks it by murmuring with his eyes half closed and a beaming smile on his plump little face*) One of 'em—the fair one—had her hair all down. I remember.

(*Another pause.*)

S. MAN. (*gravely*) Ah! Soft hair it was too, very soft and long—very—very long.

WADDLES. (*sitting up quickly*) Yes, I remember now—you did me out of a nice thing that night with your lanky legs and your bony shoulders. I'm not sure it's diplomacy for a man of my build to be seen about by ladies with a man of yours.

S. MAN. You wern't your present magnificent proportions then, Waddles—you were a slim little freckled, impudent—scaramouch.

WADDLES. I was—I was—oh, I know I was. (*and he beams again with renewed delight*)

DICK. Oh, those days—those nights. What times we used to have.

WADDLES. And will again.

DOCTOR.

DICK.

S. MAN.

(*together*) Rather—one of these fine days.

WADDLES. (*after a pause*) I don't think I was ever *very*, was I?

DICK. Well, I don't know about *very* freckled, was he, Miles?

DOCTOR. Well, he *was* freckled, anyhow.

WADDLES. I don't care if I was. (*he looks cheerfully at the circle round the table—the* SOLDIER-MAN *has begun to deal*) Oh dear, oh dear. We're all just as young as we were then.

(*There is a pause, the three men look up with a wry face.*)

DICK. Just as young.

S. MAN.

DOCTOR.

(*together*) Ahem—just.

WADDLES. (*patting his own bald spot apprehensively*) Well!! almost—anyhow. I fear I'm beginning to lose a little control over my figure, but in some respects I'm sure we're younger, aren't we, Dickie?

DICK. Much younger. Misdeal again, Miles.

DOCTOR. That's the third time. It's the lobster's flown to your head, my poor boy.

S. MAN. (*smiling*) Ah, the young 'uns of to-day don't know how to enjoy life as we knew how to enjoy it. They're all so damned calculatory.

DICK. No such word.

5S. MAN. You know what I mean. We, Dickie, you and I, never stopped in the old days to turn things over in our minds and grow grey over counting the chances of what would or wouldn't happen. We went slap at everything, like the healthy young devils we were.

WADDLES. Are.

ALL. Are, of course.

S. MAN. And if we got our ears boxed—damme—it did us good—and—er—if we *didn't* get our ears boxed—well——

DICK. (*cheerfully, speaking for him*) Damme, that did us good, too.

GENERAL CHORUS. (*cheerfully*) So it did, of course it did.

DOCTOR. Ah, we are a merry Trinity.

WADDLES. (*quickly*) Quadrity! Don't forget *me*, if you please.

S. MAN. Ah, Waddy, you're not an original member—you grew on to it later.

DICK. You did—you plump little parasite.

DOCTOR. It was three years later you threw in yourself on us, Waddy dear.

WADDLES. (*gloomy*) I know it was. But oh, after all these years don't you think it would be more gen-

tlemanly of you three to forget your blessed Trinity, and start friends level?

S. MAN. Damme! I've mis-dealt again.

DOCTOR. It must be the lobster—it couldn't be the wine.

DICK. Here, I'll have a go this time.

S. MAN. (*leaning back in his chair and stretching his long legs*) Remember that night in Boulogne when we——

DICK. (*gravel*) Ought we to discuss that before Waddles—he's very young.

DOCTOR. And very immature.

WADDLES. It is my birthday. I won't keep on being got at, and my glass has been empty for ages.

DICK. (*rising quickly*) My dear Waddy, I'm awfully sorry. I left the drinks in the dining room. You deal on where I left off—oh—where did I leave off—never mind, go on where I did. I don't know, a card or two more or less won't make much difference at this time of night.

DOCTOR. (*counting the cards*) Count your cards, boys.

(*They do so. Then the* DOCTOR *folds his hands across his middle and lets his roving eyes rest on a photograph of* PHYLLIS *that hangs on the wall.*)

(*placidly*) It's a wonderful invention, this photography—sure that's a speaking likeness of the child.

(*The other two, absorbed in counting, merely grunt.*)

She's a beautiful gyurl!

S. MAN. She is.

WADDLES. Beautiful indeed.

DOCTOR. Why did none of us have the chance of meeting such an angel when we were the Imp's age?

S. MAN. Because we'd all have got married, and then none of us would have been here to-night.

WADDLES. (*having counted*) Seven.

S. MAN. And seven here. The Imp's a lucky little chap.

WADDLES. He is so—no, it's eight I have.

DOCTOR. Be—devil the cyards. I can't count for thinking.

WADDLES. It's my belief the Imp will have to let off a lot of steam before he's fit to run in double harness.

(*The two others give grunts of mutual acquiescence. Then there is a pause, broken by—*)

ALL. I wish— (*they stop and each looks at the other*)
DOCTOR. What?

(WADDLES *and the* SOLDIER-MAN *pick up their cards a little sheepishly.*)

S. MAN. Nothing.
DOCTOR. (*looking at them both, quizzically*) It's the same case wid all of us, I'm thinking.
WADDLES. What's that?
S. MAN. I fail to follow.
DOCTOR. (*gravely*) Why, all of us u'd gladly lay down in the mud, and let Miss Phylley dance herself thro' life on our bedabbled corpses.
WADDLES. (*loftily*) Not at all—not at all.
S. MAN. Not I.
DOCTOR. (*shaking his head*) Ye're fooling yourselves, the facts is as I say. Howld yer whist. Here he comes and the whiskey wine.

(DICK *enters with a bottle from Tantalus.*)

DICK. It's nearly empty.
DOCTOR. Nearly empty, it is that an' more. Never mind—when it's finished, we can all go and forage in the barrel. Here are your cards, my son.
DICK. (*sitting down and picking up his cards*) Miles, how the dickens do you keep so tidy? You don't even get tobacco ash on your trousers (*and he brushes himself vigorously with his hands*)
S. MAN. It's constitutional.
DOCTOR. (*looking at his cards*) I propose.
WADDLES. (*looking at his hand*) I pass.
DICK. Half a minute. I haven't looked at my hand. I wish to goodness the Imp were here. I find his advice at cards most invaluable.
DOCTOR. His father was a good card player.
DICK. Card playing's a gift. (*then looking round at the other players*) What's happened?
S. MAN. Proposal over there.
DICK. (*as he laboriously arranges and examines his cards*) Jolly tactful of him to go out to-night, so that we four should be all to ourselves, wasn't it?
WADDLES. Very—we're waiting for you—what do you do?

DICK. Oh, is it me to shout? Oh, I pass—no, I don't—I'll accept you, Doctor.

WADDLES. Come on, we'll down 'em. My lead.

DICK. Hallo, I've only got twelve cards. (*he counts them out*)

S. MAN. It's an imperfect pack—it must be.

DICK. Try another, and deal again.

S. MAN. I'm a bit sick of dealing, somebody else have a go.

DOCTOR. (*cheerfully*) I'll do it. (*and he deals while the others watch him*)

S. MAN. I say, old man—I hear you didn't take that fishing after all.

DICK. No.

S. MAN. Why the dickens didn't you—it's quite the best.

DICK. I daresay, but I came to the conclusion that I couldn't afford it.

S. MAN. Rubbish!

DICK. It's fact.

S. MAN. Then I expect you let the Imp run away with all the spare cash, eh, Master Dick?

(DICK *smiles.*)

DICK. He runs away with a good deal, bless him.

DOCTOR. It's a mistake.

DICK. What is?

WADDLES. You spoil him.

DICK. I don't.

DOCTOR. (*interposing quickly*) Ah, now do let's drop the Imp, and get on with our game. We're the Imps to-night, not 21, any man Jack of us.

(*The others pay no attention to him, and the* SOLDIER-MAN *goes on gravely.*)

S. MAN. I think, Dick, if you'll allow me to say so, you're wrong in letting him run away with the idea that his income is unlimited.

DICK. He's welcome to all I've got—and he knows it.

WADDLES. And doesn't scruple to make use of his knowledge, I'm thinking.

S. MAN. That's all very well, old man—but I don't think you've got more than enough for yourself.

DICK. Oh, I want very little.

WADDLES. Why have you given up your cob, Dickie?

DICK. (*shoving his fingers through his hair*) Oh, I I dunno.

S. MAN. You didn't shoot last year. How was that?

DICK. Er—I dunno.

WADDLES. I do; you think the money is more profitable squandered on the boy.

DICK. Well, p'raps I do.

S. MAN. Rot.

DOCTOR. Not at all.

WADDLES. You spoil him.

S. MAN. Does he know that you're giving up all the fun you used to get out of life, that he may enjoy himself more than's good for him?

DICK. He doesn't, because I'm not.

DOCTOR. You let him have every mortal thing he wants.

DICK. I don't.

WADDLES. If he cried for the moon you'd make an effort to get it for him.

DICK. So would all of you.

WADDLES. It can't be a good training.

DOCTOR. No, indeed it can't.

DICK. Look here, it's all very well to round on me, but—but, under the circumstances, I don't think I've turned the boy out badly.

(WADDLES *shakes his head and groans.*)

I think he's a splendid fellow, if you ask me.

S. MAN. So do I—that's not quite the point.

DICK. Of course, I may have gone wrong in one or two little things——

DOCTOR. Ye've gone wrong on more than one or two little things to my certain knowledge.

DICK. Still I've done my best to turn him out all right. Suppose you three chaps have a go at him now. Every little helps, and I'm jolly sure that out of our united experiences we ought to be able to teach him a thing or two.

WADDLES. (*beamingly*) I'm sure any one of us could instruct him how to have a high old time.

DICK. (*shortly*) That's not what I mean.

DOCTOR. Shut up, Waddles, you're a rake.

(WADDLES *chortles with conscious pride.*)

S. MAN. Now we are on this subject, I should like to know how he does really stand—financially, I mean.

DICK. (*a little embarrassed*) Oh, he's all right that way.

DOCTOR. Let's see, how auld was he when he became our property?

DICK. Two.

S. MAN. And from then till now——

WADDLES. Nineteen years.

S. MAN. He has been your old man of the sea—that is to say—he has lived with you?

(DICK *nods.*)

DOCTOR. And we've each contributed a paltry £25 per annum for the little beggar's maintenance.

WADDLES. And what with tutors for this and tutors for that and sending him to Harrow and buying him books and cricket bats, I don't think that there can be much margin on that hundred a year.

S. MAN. Dickie, as co-guardians with you of that boy —we demand to know—what is his financial position?

DICK. Well, as a matter fact, he's all right. That—er—£100 a year that we've arranged to let him have—I—er—well, as a matter of fact, I've made that a sort of a sinking fund for him—I—I've never touched that. It's been left to accumulate and—er—well, it's about £3000 now.

WADDLES. (*bangs the table*) I thought as much.

DOCTOR. So did I.

S. MAN. Then you have paid for his entire bringing up—ever since he's belonged to us?

DICK. It's been all right. I didn't want the money for myself, and I thought our allowances would be very handy for him in a lump sum when he came of age.

S. MAN. You've done more than was necessary.

WADDLES. Much more than he had any right to expect.

DICK. (*rising quietly*) I don't think so, any one of you in my place would have done just the same.

(*He rises and goes to his desk.*)

He is Charlie's boy—(*a silence falls on the men*) you remember when old Charlie came and told the four of us he meant to be married.

WADDLES. And what a silly ass sort of thing we thought it was then.

DOCTOR. (*shaking his head sadly*) Oh, dear old Charlie—one of the best.

DICK. (*sadly*) One of the best.

(Another pause—the men's minds drift back into the past.)

That wedding day.

WADDLES. One of my boots was too tight.

S. MAN. I was best man.

WADDLES. Only because ye looked most showy walking up the aisle.

DICK. Then two years afterwards the coming of the Imp, and the passing away of Mrs. Charlie. Poor old chap, how lonely and desolate it seemed to leave him. Do you remember how we used to watch him from our windows walking up and down that field behind the stables day in, day out, with the Imp huddled up in his arms?

DOCTOR. He was hard hit—poor old son.

WADDLES. He was that.

S. MAN. Broke him up.

DICK. He'd have got out of it, had it not been for his dread of leaving the Imp alone. Do you remember this —(*he goes to the desk and takes out a worn letter and reads*) "Im going, old man—and somehow I don't much care. I've never given much thought to the other side—but anyhow she's there. Dick, I want to speak of my boy. I'm leaving him. I'm helpless. I'm leaving him alone, there is only you, you and the Trinity, boys look after my boy when I'm gone. Make a man of him, make him what you know he ought to be. Make the Trinity proud of him, for their old Charlie's sake, let him step into my place with you all, let him be one of us. I'm leaving him so terribly alone. Oh, for God's sake, Dick, be Father—Mother—be all to him." (DICK *stops and refolds the letter*) And—and—I've done it, boys. I've been father and mother and—and, oh, I've been a damn fool, I daresay—but I've done my best. (*then with a sudden outburst*) Hang it all, so have you, you've all made fools of yourselves about him at one time or another. You—(*he points a scornful finger at the* SOLDIER-MAN) You've swaggered down Piccadilly with him sittting on your shoulders rubbing your top hat the wrong way. I was with you and saw even the cabmen laughing. (*then he turns fiercely on* WADDLES) You—you were caught in a four-wheeler in Pall Mall with a rocking horse on top, a most invidious position for an unmarried man. (*they all laugh*) You laugh at me. Very well—laugh away. I'm a hen with one chicken, I daresay, and a hen with one chicken I'll be to the end of the chapter, but I mean that chicken to be a

bally swan before I go and tell Charlie how we've reared his boy.

(*And very excited he goes across to the bureau and replaces the letter, shutting the drawer with a snap.*)

DOCTOR. Well, well, well—he's a fine ould youngster—but all this has given me the doldrums, Dickie, me son—excursh into the larder, and trot out another jug of whiskey wine.

DICK. I—I—I'm awfully sorry. I didn't mean to get so serious.

WADDLES. Let's get on with our game; there won't be time for me to get that £7 back if we don't.

DICK. Come along, Waddy,—you shall have it, if I have to revoke to give it you—wait till I get the whiskey, where the devil are the matches.

WADDLES. Hurry up.

S. MAN. You chaps drink too much. Waddles, how is it you can *not* keep your waistcoat buttoned?

WADDLES. Oh, do leave my wardrobe alone.

(DICK *retires to the pantry, laughing.*)

S. MAN. There never was a man so completely devoted to any one as Dick is to that boy.

WADDLES. Talk of love of women.

DOCTOR. If anything happened to him he's—what's that?

(*A pause, they all listen.*)

S. MAN. Some one at the front door.

(*Another pause. The door is heard to open and close softly, then another pause, then the room door opens softly and the* IMP *peers in—he is surprised at the sight of the Trinity, but smiles at them a little vasantly.*)

IMP. Hullo!

(*The Trinity glare at him in dismay.*)

S. MAN. Good God!

WADDLES. Imp, where have you been?

IMP. (*with a chuckle*) Sh—l. Spen'in' the evenin' with my fiancée.

DOCTOR. (*with a shout*) What!

S. MAN. You young idiot, where in thunder have you been?

IMP. Sh—l—it's a secret—doncher tell Dick.

WADDLES. Phyllis.

IMP. Sir Horace, I dinnot refer to Phyllis. Phyllis' sweet girl—but she's not my fiancée. Don't you tell Dick I sezzo, I'm keepin' my fiancée back for a bit. I'll s'prize you all with her some day. Now if I could get to bed. They made me drink heaps of things all mixed up together to see if I was a man now that's over. I shewed 'em I was a man—and so—now—now do you think you could put me to bed, Sir 'Orace?

(DICK *heard off.*)

S. MAN. Here's Dick—keep him out. I'll get the young beggar to bed.

WADDLES. Oh, Dick must never know.

DOCTOR. Quick! Man—quick! He *must* know he's come home.

S. MAN. Yes, but not *how* he's come home.

IMP. Oh, I'm so awfully unwell—don' mention this lil' matter to Dick.

DOCTOR. He's coming.

S. MAN. Lock the door.

(*He grabs the bewildered* IMP *and rushes off with him, while* WADDLES *goes to intercept* DICK. *He shuts the door and hunts for the key.*)

WADDLES. There's no key.

S. MAN. Keep him out for a minute anyhow.

(*He and* DOCTOR *exit with* IMP.)

DICK. (*pushing against door*) Hullo, what's against the door? (*a pause*) Open, one of you chaps—my hands are full.

WADDLES. Ye can't come in.

DICH. What do ye mean?

WADDLES. I won't let ye in till ye swear that for a whole year ye won't make a single rude remark about the gradual disappearance of the hair on the top of my head.

DICK. All right. I swear.

WADDLES. (*looking round in agony for the others*) Holy powers, I wonder will they be long.

DICK. Take your fat little carcas out of the way, Waddles.

WADDLES. What's that? Fat little carcas—I think you said.

DICK. Fat little carcas—fat head! Open the door.

WADDLES. Withdraw your "fat little carcas" and I will move. Apologise—apologise!

DICK. Oh, I apologise. Miles, take the little beggar away.

(*A crash of glass from outside the door.*)

Oh, damn!

WADDLES. What's that?

DICK. You blithering idiot, you've made me drop the whiskey.

WADDLES. Oh, and here's a blessed stream trickling under the door.

DICK. Lap it up—I'm soaked to the skin.

WADDLES. Oh, think of the waste of whiskey. Go, get some more, there's a pet lamb.

(DICK *retires, grumbling, as the* DOCTOR *and* SOLDIER-MAN *re-enter.*)

WADDLES. (*excitedly*) I kept him out—is he——

DOCTOR. Yes, he's in bed—Phew—what the dickens are we to do now at all—at all.

S. MAN. Dick mustn't see him till the morning.

WADDLES. Don't let him know he's home—he doesn't expect him to-night—so, it'll be all right.

DOCTOR. What the devil did he mean about his "fiancée."

WADDLES. Who can she be?

S. MAN. A bar-maid for a sovereign.

WADDLES. What'll Dick say?

S. MAN. Nothing—if he's wise. Eh! Here he comes.

(DICK *enters with the whiskey in a jug and the broken Tantalus bottle.*)

DICK. Here I am—look at me—thanks to you lunatics, I'm smelling like a preambulating public house.

DOCTOR. Good gracious—what's up wid you?

DICK. What do you mean by letting him play such tricks? You're old enough to know better—so you are, Miles—just look at the state of my trousers.

DOCTOR. Well—well. Maybe it's a blessing in dis-

guise. What wid whiskey inside and out, the prospects of the evening are improving.

WADDLES. It serves you right; how dare you be serious on my forty-seventh birthday?

S. MAN. Forty-seventh nonsense! Twenty-first—time enough to be forty-seven to-morrow morning. Here's fortune to us boys! Dickie, what's that thing of old Thackeray's you used to spout under the influence of liquor?

WADDLES. (*clapping his hands*) "In the brave days when I was twenty-one."

S. MAN. That's it.

DOCTOR. Sure, I've not heard it for years.

DICK. Here's your drink, Waddles! Good gad, I feel as if I was at school again. How did the old thing go?

(*And he recites the poem, the three fellows waving their glasses and chiming in cheerily with the refrain.*)

With pensive eyes the little room I view
Where in my youth I weathered it so long
With a wild mistress, a staunch friend or two,
And a light heart, still bursting into song.
Making a mock of Life and all its cares
Rich in the glory of my rising sun,
Lightly I vaulted up four pair of stairs,
In the brave days when I was twenty-one.

To dream long dreams of beauty, love, and power,
From founts of hope that never will out-run,
To drain all life's quintessence in an hour,
Give me the days when I was twenty-one.

(*And as he finishes he lifts his glass.*)

A toast, boys, a toast—all standing!

(*They all rise.*)

Good luck and long life to the Trinity.

WADDLES. (*fiercely*) Quadrity!

OMNES. (*raising glasses*) Quadrity!

(*They drink; as they are doing so, the door softly opens and* PHYLLIS *looks in, smiling.*)

PHYLL. (*softly*) Good-night!

(*All the men wheel round towards her and echo.*)

OMNES. Good-night!

(*There is a slight pause, no one moves and she kisses her hand; they all gravely kiss theirs to her, and she softly closes the door and disappears—there is another pause, and a half sigh escapes from all the men as they stand looking at the door.*)

DICK. (*tenderly*) Bless her. (*then, with a change of tone*) Come along. I'm sure it's my turn to deal.

(*They all go back to the card table and sit down as the*)

CURTAIN FALLS.

ACT II.

The same scene. Next morning.

(DICK *and* PHYLLIS *and* MRS. ERICSON *and* WADDLES *just finishing breakfact.*)

DICK. (*passing his cup to* PHYLLIS) You're a terrible chap for late hours, Waddles.

SIR H. Only on my birthday.

DICK. What's the matter with the Imp, he's not down yet?

PHYLL. This is your third cup, Dick.

DICK. I always require four after a night with Waddles—don't I, Waddles?

(SIR H., *half buried in his tea-cup, mumbles an indistinct reply.*)

MRS. E. I hope that little bed didn't inconvenience you, Sir Horace.

SIR H. Oh, not a bit. I only rolled out once.

MRS. E. Oh, Sir Horace, I'm *so* grieved.

DICK. Not at all—his tendency to roll is not due to the size of the bed, is it Waddles?

(*The* IMP *enters, a little heavy-eyed, but with an affectation of cheerfulness.*)

IMP. Morning—morning, every one.

DICH. Hullo, boy.

OTHERS. Good morning, Imp.

IMP. I'm jolly late—so sorry. I was shaving.

SIR H. (*gravely enquiring*) I beg pardon?

IMP. (*turning to him*) Shaving—Sir Horace!

SIR H. (*as if much impressed*) Oh—I see—shaving—yes, of course, very wise—very wise.

MRS. E. (*giving him a plate*) I'm afraid the bacon is quite cold, dear.

IMP. (*with a slight shudder*) Bacon—I really don't think I can this morning.

(WADDLES *chuckles.*)

Is there any toast left?

(PHYLLIS *rings the bell.*)

Thanks, old girl.

DICK. You weren't at a birthday, Impy—you ought to be able to take your food.

SIR H. I have often found that an evening spent in peaceful, homely talk produces a disinclination for rich food in the morning. I observe my theory proved in your case this morning, Master Richard.

IMP. (*with a nervous laugh*) Do you? Could I have some more hot water?

(PHYLLIS *runs and rings.*)

Thanks, old girl.

(MAID *enters.*)

Some more toast and hot water, Dodd.

DICK. You bolted off to bed very mysteriously last night.

SIR H. Richard did as his elders bid him, like a good boy—didn't you, Richard?

IMP. Yes.

SIR H. Richard was most desirous to say good-night to you, Dick—but, on our promising that you would tuck him up when he was safely in bed—he consented to retire without your good-night kiss.

DICK. Shut up, Waddles. Phyllis, it's Friday—if you let me have your accounts and my cheque book, I'll write one out. I shan't be a minute, Waddles, old man; you're not going till the three-thirty, are you?

SIR H. (*who has never taken his eyes off the* IMP, *much to the* IMP'S *discomfort*) No! Richard, don't you think a Bromo Seltzer would do you good?

DICK. Eh?

SIR H. He doesn't feel well—do you, Richard?

IMP. (*quickly, darting a furious glance at* SIR H.) Quite well, thank you.

SIR H. Dick, I think he's sickening for something. Won't somebody look at his tongue?

DICK. (*cheerily*) Anything wrong, Imp?

IMP. (*laughing*) Of course not, Dick. It's Sir Horace's joke, that's all. Wish they'd bring that toast.

PHYLL. They had to make it, you know—you're so late, I expect the fire was just made up.

DICK. (*at door*) Here's his toast. No, it's his hot water. I shan't be a moment, old man.

(DICK *goes out as the* MAID *enters with water jug.* MRS. ERICSON *goes to small work table.* SIR H. *appears absorbed in the morning paper.*)

SIR H. (*to himself*) Sh! Dear—dear—dear!

MRS. E. What's that?

SIR H. Sad—sad case! Poor young fellow!

PHYLL. (*lightly*) What happened?

SIR H. Oh, sad case. This young fellow, it appears—nice young fellow—sweet nature and all that—plenty of loving friends—happy home and all that. But weak—very weak—falls into bad hands—sits up late—drinks heaps of things all mixed up to prove that he was a man—what's the result? Proves he's only a young fool—and next morning at breakfast he's seized with a violent——

(*The* IMP *chokes into his tea-cup—and* PHYLLIS *and* SIR H. *rise hurriedly to avoid damage.*)

SIR H. (*waving the paper at him*) Damme, Sir—pull yourself together or you'll choke.

PHYLL. Well, Imp, as you don't seem to be eating any breakfast, I'll go and get the accounts for Dick.

IMP. (*through his choke*) Cut along.

MRS. E. Did you change your vest, this morning?

SIR H. (*looking up, then turning fiercely to the* IMP) Do you hear, sir—did you change your vest this morning?

IMP. Hang it all—yes, I suppose so.

MRS. E. (*almost to herself*) I'd better see those new ones must be marked— (*she gathers up her work and hurries out*)

(*Pause.* SIR H. *glares at the* IMP *a moment, then returns with a grunt to his paper. The* IMP *rises and lights a cigarette.*)

SIR H. (*not looking up*) That's mere bravado—you can't enjoy your cigarette this morning.

IMP. (*after a pause, chucks it into the grate*) I can't.

(SIR H. *grunts.*)

IMP. (*with his back to* SIR H. *and his foot on the fender, stares into the empty grate*) I say——

(SIR H., *not moving, grunts again.*)

It—it—was jolly good of you chaps not to tell Dick.
SIR H. (*shortly*) Don't call me a chap, boy.
IMP. I beg your pardon.
SIR H. And Colonel Grahame would be exceedingly annoyed if he heard himself described so familiarly by a boy of your age.
IMP. He's too good a sort to mind.
SIR H. He's no such thing.
IMP. You needn't run him down—you know he's a friend of Dick's.
SIR H. Run him down! God bless my soul. How dare you!
IMP. He's a good sort, whatever you may say.
SIR H. Whatever I—good gracious—are you aware that you're a young scamp?
IMP. I am not——

(*He lights another cigarette.*)

SIR H. You'll be sick, sir—throw it away. The Colonel has often expressed to me the deep regret with which he has noticed the growing disrespect that the young men of to-day have for their elders.
IMP. (*quietly*) I don't think any one would have occasion to say that if all our elders were like you four chaps.

(*A pause.*)

SIR H. (*completely mollified*) Give me one of your cigarettes.

(*The* IMP *hands him his case.*)

Now, then, what's all this about this woman?
IMP. (*innocently*) What woman?
SIR H. (*with scorn*) Your disreputable fiancée.
IMP. (*with an affectation of surprise*) Phyllis?
SIR H. (*jumping out of his chair*) How dare you, sir?
IMP. Isn't Phyllis my fiancée?

SIR H. She is, sir.

IMP. Then, what do you mean by calling her disreputable? I don't think it's right to speak of your friends behind their backs in the way you do.

SIR H. I do not.

IMP. You said the Colonel wasn't a good sort.

SIR H. No such thing.

IMP. And now you tell me Phyllis is disreputable.

SIR H. How dare you?

IMP. I shall have to ask you to prove your statement.

SIR H. I meant the woman you're keeping back—the one you're going to surprise us with. Tell me all about her.

IMP. (*gravely*) Really, Sir Horace—gentlemen do not discuss their little affaires de coeur with each other after breakfast—not good form.

SIR H. Good form be damned—how dare you?

IMP. Dick has always begged me to endeavour to discourage bad language among my friends—would you mind trying to check your tendency? You'll find it will get quite a hold on you, if you don't watch yourself. Even I have had to be careful.

SIR H. You're an impertinent young jackanapes.

IMP. (*slowly*) No, I'm not— (*there is a long pause*) I'm awfully miserable, that's all.

SIR H. (*insinuatingly*) Poor old Imp— (*he goes to the boy and puts his hand on his shoulder*) What's her name?

IMP. Nothing of the sort.

SIR H. Don't you think you'd better tell Dick all about it?

IMP. Not yet.

SIR H. (*very quietly*) Are you behaving quite honorably towards Phyllis?

(*A pause.*)

You had too much liquor last night, you've got a head on you. Come along, sir—we'll walk briskly down to my club, have a Brandy and Soda, and chat the whole thing over like men.

IMP. (*languidly*) I don't mind the Brandy and Soda—but, you'll have to tackle the talk.

SIR H. (*handing him clothes brush*) We'll see about that. Kindly brush me.

(*The* IMP *does as he is told.*)

And don't you ever allow yourself to fall into Dick's never sufficiently to be regretted notion that a peck or two of dust on a man's frock coat is a matter of minor importance. I was very fond of a dear dirty fellow of that sort once—but he came to no good—the dust was too heavy on him, it weighed him down. P'raps the way he whiskeyed and watered it made it a little heavier. Ready?

IMP. Yes.

SIR H. Trot along, then, there's a good boy—we'll be back before lunch anyhow.

(*The two of them turn to go out;* SIR H. *takes the* IMP'S *arm affectionately. As they do so,* DICK *and* PHYLLIS *enter.*)

DICK. Sorry I was so long, but the Chancellor of the Exchequer was very complicated this morning.

PHYLLIS. I wasn't a bit—it's only one or two places in the adding up that I got wrong.

DICK. How the Imp and I ever paid for a single meal before you and your mother came and took us in hand, beats me. Going out, Waddles?

SIR H. Richard and I were going for a short constitutional to the club. I want to see if there are any letters; we shan't be more than twenty minutes at the outside.

DICK. The Doctor and the Soldier-Man are to be round here about 12:30.

SIR H. I know—come, Richard.

(*Exit as before.*)

DICK. (*sitting down, resignedly*) Well, I'm ready to hear the rest now.

PHYLL. It's no good making a joke of it—you know it's true.

DICK. Well, say it is. I'm living beyond my means.

PHYLL. No, you're not—we're living beyond your means—look at the money you squander on me—look at the money you squander on mother—look at the money you squander on the Imp—look at his clothes, look at my clothes—then look at your own old things, it's perfectly disgraceful—and then, Colonel Grahame tells me you used to have a little shooting in Scotland, and since you've supported us you've had to give it up—so with your horse and everything else—it's all for other people—never anything for yourself.

DICK. That's where you're all wrong—it's all for myself. I'm very fond of your mother. I love the Imp—and—I (*a pause; he looks up and meets her eye*) have the greatest respect for you—so, when I see those that I'm fond of, those I love, and those I respect, all happy and contented, I puff myself up with righteous pride and wouldn't change places with the Emperor of Germany.

PHYLL. Dick why do you respect me?

DICK. (*bluntly*) I don't know.

PHYLL. It's very unkind of you, I consider. Is it because I owe everything in the world to you?

DICK. Good Lord, no!

PHYLL. Is it because I'm such a good adder up?

DICK. P'raps!

PHYLL. Or is it because the Imp has graciously consented to make me his wife?

DICK. Why do you put it that way?

PHYLL. Isn't that the proper way to speak of his omnipotence? I'm the sort of woman who loves to bow down before her husband and beg him to put his heel upon her neck.

DICK. (*a little puzzled*) Are you really?

PHYLL. And the Imp is to be my husband, and I long for him to show his power and grind me beneath an iron heel of authority.

DICK. Oh, I don't think the Imp would ever do a thing like that. He'll be master of his own house and all that, of course, but——

PHYLL. Will he—do you really think he will?

DICK. I don't think I've considered the matter.

PHYLL. I have; the Imp and I will chat it over some day; I daresay we shall come to an understanding. I think I must try and do something that'll make you not respect me quite so much.

DICK. Eh?

PHYLL. It's an awful nuisance to be so fearfully respected—it makes one feel quite lonely, almost as if one was a marble statue out in the east wind. I should have to put up with being respected if I were a fright like the pictures of Queen Elizabeth—but as I'm only me—it's different. Couldn't you give up respecting me so fearfully? Just now and then.

DICK. I—I don't see that it's possible—but—I'll have a try if you like.

PHYLL. (*delightedly*) Will you, really? Oh do—begin now.

DICK. Well—I—er—it isn't a thing one can do all at

once, is it? You'd have to—sort of—give me a lead, you know.

PHYLL. Would I—oh, yes, I suppose that is the best way—well, suppose I do this—I put this arm round your shoulder, so— (*she is standing behind his chair*) and then I lean my cheek against the back of your head sympathetically, like this—How does that feel?

DICK. Feels as if I was going to be electrocuted.

PHYLL. Oh!

DICK. You mustn't ruffle my hair, you know, coz the Soldier-Man's coming to lunch, and—if—everybody's hair isn't smarmy, he loses his appetite.

PHYLL. Oh, bother the Colonel—let's talk about ourselves. Dick, what is the thing you wish for most in the world?

DICK. To see—

PHYLL. Don't say it— (*quickly*) I know exactly what you're going to say. (*and with a choke, she moves quickly from him and goes up to the window*)

DICK. (*a little surprised at her tone*) Do you really?

PHYLL. Yes.

DICK. What was I going to say?

PHYLL. To see me and the Imp happily married, weren't you?

DICK. Well, as a matter of fact, I was.

PHYLL. Oh, I'm so glad—it's the thing I wish for most, too—isn't it lucky that you should make all these plans for us—and we should be so pleased about it? Oh, but doesn't such happiness make one nervous—one begins to dread one's unworthiness and to feel sure that something must happen sooner or later to prevent it coming off. Oh! if anything happened to prevent this—I—think I should die—just fade away from grief—don't you, Dick?

DICK. Nothing will happen, dear!

PHYLL. Are you sure—Oh, say you're quite sure.

DICK. I'm quite sure—sure.

PHYLL. Suppose the Imp were to tire of me?

DICK. That's impossible.

PHYLL. (*snuggling up to him*) Is it, Dick—why is it?

DICK. Because—oh—because *you* are *you*, I suppose.

PHYLL. Don't you think if you were in the Imp's place you might get a little tired of me sometimes, just a little?

DICK. No—not a little.

PHYLL. Ah—but you haven't ever pictured yourself in the Imp's place.

DICK. (*softly, as if to himself*) Yes, I have often.

PHYLL. (*Rising and looking him full in the eyes*) Have you—pictured yourself married to me—oh, Dick! (*then tenderly*) Was it nice?

DICK. (*with a laugh*) Here—here—here—come along now—Finances! we've chatted enough nonsense for one morning.

PHYLL. Yes, I think we've done very well—considering.

DICK. Let's see—£473—in the current account wasn't it?

PHYLL. Yes.

DICK. (*lightly*) Then who dares to say the firm isn't flourishing?

(*A pause,* PHYLLIS *looks out at nothing in particular.*)

PHYLL. How odd it would be, wouldn't it?

DICK. (*looking up*) What?

PHYLL. What you're always picturing to yourself.

DICK. (*aghast at the notion*) You're a trying young woman to make a casual remark to. I'm always picturing myself married to all sorts of very nice people—why I've pictured myself married to your mother before now.

PHYLL. So have I—in fact, I've suggested it to mother often.

DICK. Thank you, very much. I think I shall get through these papers more quickly in my own room.

(*He rises—so does she.*)

PHYLL. I'll come with him.

DICK. (*firmly*) You'll do no such thing.

PHYLL. But I'd like to.

DICK. I don't care—you've pictured your mother as my wife——

(*Enter* MRS. ERICSON.)

So you've pictured me as your other parent, so perhaps you will go a step further and picture yourself doing what your parent tells you for once in a way.

PHYLL. Yes, papa dear.

MRS. E. Papa dear!

DICK. (*aghast*) No, no, dear lady—No—no—not at

all—merely a silly dream. Please don't consider it seriously—a dream—merely a dream. (*he dashes out*)

(MRS. E. *looks after* DICK, *then back to his door, and says hurriedly.*)

MRS. E. Phyllis!

PHYLL. (*somewhat startled by her tone*) Mother!

MRS. E. Oh my dear, I've done a dreadful thing, I know it was very wrong of me—but I couldn't help it.

PHYLL. Gracious—what have you done?

MRS. E. I found a crumpled letter in the hall—and I picked it up and smoothed it out to see who it belonged to, and, as I was smoothing it out I accidentally read a little and—and—oh it gave me such a shock that I read it all—I—I've read it twice or three times—I don't know which and oh—I really don't know what to say or think.

PHYLL. Whose letter was it?

MRS. E. It was a woman's letter—(*a pause*) to Dick.

PHYLL. To Dick?

MRS. E. Yes! he—he's making arrangements to be married, and—he doesn't want any of us to know.

PHYLL. (*slowly*) Making arrangements to be—How do you know?

MRS. E. Oh, there's quite a lot about it in the letter.

PHYLL. Arrangements to be——

(*A pause.*)

MRS. E. It will be terribly inconvenient for us—of course, he won't want us with him then.

PHYLL. Are you sure?

MRS. E. Oh, perfectly sure. I think Dick might have been more open with us—after all we've done for him.

PHYLL. What have we done for him, but sponge on him and spend his money?

MRS. E. (*helplessly waving the letter*) Oh, what am I to do with it— (*a pause*) I—I think I'll go and drop it behind the coats again.

PHYLL. No—give it to Dick—if it's his.

MRS. E. My dear, I daren't.

PHYLL. Give it to me, then—I will.

MRS. E. (*a little nervous*) I don't think you ought to read it dear—some of it is a little——

PHYLL. (*with a bitter smile*) Don't be alarmed, I don't intend to read it.

MRS. E. (*handing it to her with a parting glance at*

it) They really must be very much in love with each other.

(PHYLLIS *takes the letter and fights against her desire to read it—but eventually she gives way, and with a little gasp, she reads it hurriedly—then she turns her horrified gaze and meets her mother's eyes.*)

PHYLL. (*completely awed*) What sort of woman is she?

MRS. E. (*feebly*) I think she must be a foreigner. I've heard foreign ladies are frequently very fluent.

(PHYLLIS *is standing staring into space—her mother is sitting on the sofa, in an attitude of deep dejection —as* DICK *enters.*)

DICK. I told you that the Trinity are lunching with us again to—— (*he stops and looks at them both in surprise*)

(PHYLLIS, *without turning to him or looking at him, holds out the letter towards him.*)

PHYLL. You dropped this.

(*He takes it in surprise—reads it in silence, then folds it up, puts it in his pocket, and looks steadily at* PHYLLIS.)

DICK. Where did you find it?

PHYLL. Mother found it behind the coats in the hall.

DICK. Oh! (*a pause*) You have read it?

MRS. E. (*with a gulp*) I didn't mean to.

DICK. Of course not.

PHYLL. (*haughtily*) I read it because I chose to.

DICK. Yes—(*a pause*)—Well!

MRS. E. The—I'm very sorry—but this is very unexpected—I'm sure, I wish you every happiness, Mr. Carew, if you're half as good a husband as you have been a friend—your wife will be a lucky woman. (*holding out her hand to him*)

PHYLL. I hope you'll be very happy, Dick—very—very—happy. You deserve to be, only—you might have trusted me with the secret, mightn't you?

DICK. I—I wish I had.

PHYLL. Kara Glynesk. It's a pretty name—I seem to have seen it somewhere.

DICK. You may have—it's all over the walls and on most of the 'buses. She performs at the Garden Theatre.

MRS. E. (*horrified*) She performs!

DICK. You've seen the large, scarlet picture of her on the walls, there's one on the boardings opposite.

PHYLL. That woman! Oh, Dick! (*then she recovers herself*) I do hope that you'll both be very—very happy.

DICK. Oh, I expect it'll be all right. I daresay she is not as red as she's painted, you know.

MRS. E. It was a lucky thing the servants didn't find the letter.

DICK. Very.

PHYLL. Does the Imp know?

DICK. Nobody knows—but you and your mother.

MRS. E. You may rely on our discretion—at least, I can only answer for my own. We shall be seven for lunch. I had better attend to my household duties before they are transferred to abler hands than mine.

DICK. Eh?

MRS. E. The future Mrs. Carewe.

DICK. Oh, yes, of course—she will naturally expecet to er——

(MRS. E. *goes out a little stiffly.*)

PHYLL. (*stands staring at the floor, then at last she says, with an effort*) It's a terrible thing for a woman to have to acknowledge herself a failure.

DICK. What do you mean?

PHYLL. I don't think you'd understand. (*another pause, and then she laughs a little*) Fancy my having to say that of you—I couldn't have said that yesterday.

DICK. There are a great many things none of us can understand.

PHYLL. It was the dearest wish of my heart to be your true friend and—and—see how hopeless it has been.

DICK. Don't say that—oh, don't say that, you hurt me.

PHYLL. Haven't *you* hurt *me?*

DICK. How? I—I didn't mean to.

PHYLL. Of course, I'm awfully glad you're going to get married. The Imp and I have often felt that the one drawback to our complete happiness was the fact that you'd be left so lonely. Now, of course—it's all

splendid—but what hurts is that you didn't let me share your secret with you—that you didn't trust me. And all these years I've tried so hard to make you trust me—and see how miserably I have failed. (*a long pause, then she says, impulsively*) Dick—Dick—I didn't mean to be a beast—I hope you'll be awfully happy—I do, indeed—I do, indeed.

(*The hall door opens and the* IMP *and* SIR H. *reappear. The* IMP *is seen to disappear hurriedly down the outer passage, while* SIR H. *comes into the room.*)

SIR H. God bless my soul—young lady, your future husband is a most erratic young man. I take him out for a short walk, and a serious chat, to be washed down with a glass of milk—and we haven't gone a hundred yards—before he gives a gasp and makes a bolt for home, saying he'd forgotten his pocket handkerchief or something equally infantile. I—hallo! Dick, what's gone wrong with you?

DICK. Nothing, old man—come to my sanctum—we'll have a quiet smoke.

PHYLL. (*aside to* DICK) Do the Trinity know?

DICK. Not a word.

SIR H. There's something in that prospect that pleases—but surely we're as well off here?

DICK. Not a bit of it. Come to my room.

(DICK *goes out.*)

SIR H. Lord—he's a masterful creature—that's the way he used to order me about 30 years ago.

PHYLL. (*bitterly*) Is it?

SIR H. When he was a boy——

PHYLL. Oh, I daresay he was just like other boys as now he is just like other men.

SIR H. (*puzzled*) I'm referring to Dick.

PHYLL. So am I——

(SIR H. *is about to speak, when* DICK *calls him sharply, and* SIR H. *hurries out very perplexed and with his face full of concern.* PHYLLIS *stands motionless for a moment, then swiftly presses her hands to her temples,, and cries out.*)

I won't believe it—it isn't true. How could such a thing be true?

(*The* IMP *enters in a great state of agitation, looking hurriedly about him — she watches his movements listlessly for a moment.*)
Lost anything?

IMP. (*shortly*) No.

(*A pause. He glances round the room furtively—she watching him; suddenly a thought flashes into her face, and she gasps.*)

PHYLL. Richard—Dick! (*she springs to her feet, pointing at him*) You!—you!—Oh, you darling, you darling!

(*And, to his intense astonishment, she flings her arms round his neck and hugs him—laughing hysterically*)

IMP. Here—good gracious! Hang it all, Phyllis, don't be an ass.

PHYLL. (*half laughing, half crying*) Isn't it like him? Oh, isn't it just like him?

IMP. Like who?

PHYLL. Nobody. Imp—Imp—you're a miserable—hopeless—immoral, horrid young man—but, oh, Imp, you darling—you've made me fearfully happy.

IMP. (*gloomily*) Have I? I—I suppose I have, (*a pause*) that's the worst of it.

PHYLL. What's that?

IMP. I—er—look here, Phyllis, it's no good going on like this, is it? I—I can't stand it, you know—it keeps me awake at nights thinking of it—and goodness knows what with everything I want all the sleep I can get just now.

PHYLL. Beauty sleep?

IMP. Look here—I—that is—you and I—er—I mean it's no good beating about the bush is it?

PHYLL. I don't understand—I—Imp, what is it?—something terrible has happened, I see it in your face. Oh—Imp, don't, don't tell me anything has happened.

IMP. Well—you see it's this way. (*he stops awkwardly*)

PHYLL. (*with an assumption of terrified anticipation*) Don't say any more just yet—give me time—you're a man—be—be very gentle with me, Imp—I—I'm only a weak, loving woman.

IMP. (*with a gulp*) Well, you see—when you and I

—were engaged—we—well—we didn't know as much of the world as we do now—did we?

(*a pause, she rises and faces him.*)

(*nervously*) I say, Phyllis, don't look at a fellow like that—it's hard enough for me as it is. Goodness knows.

PHYLL. (*slowly*) What is hard enough for you as it is?

IMP. Why, to have to tell a girl that's fond of you—— (*he stops again*)

PHYLL. Don't say it, Mr. *Audaine*, I understand.

(*A long pause.*)

IMP. You—you don't think any the worse of me, do you, Phyllis?

PHYLL. I—I—somehow, I can't think at all—everything seems dark—my brain won't work—it's numb.

IMP. (*in agony*) Oh, I say, don't—there's a dear girl—I—know it must be awful for you—but—but—Oh, what could I do, Phyllis—I couldn't help myself. I fought against it, I did, indeed.

PHYLL. You—you—love—some one—else?

IMP. I—I—couldn't help it, really.

PHYLL. Tell me—everything. I—I won't faint, I can be very brave.

IMP. I will—there isn't very much to tell.

PHYLL. Who is she?

IMP. She's the most beautiful woman in the world.

PHYLL. Oh, Imp—what does beauty matter? Is she very—very good?

IMP. Er—of course, she's good.

PHYLL. Is she very—very religious—and domesticated?

IMP. I don't know about very religious or the other thing. But she's got glorious eyes. Oh, if you could only look into her eyes—you'd know how good she was then.

PHYLL. Yes, I expect I should—Imp, I will not let the world know the—the heartaches I shall have to bear, I will be very brave, you shall take mother and me to call.

IMP. Eh? Oh, would you—you see—it—it isn't quite definite just yet.

PHYLL. Doesn't she love you?

IMP. Yes, of course, that part of it's all right, but—you see, marriage is a jolly serious thing—it's for life,

you know. For good and all—and all that. So one can't only think of the love part—there are settlements and things. I shall have to settle all I've got on her, of course.

PHYLL. Does she insist on that?

IMP. She doesn't, of course—but—she's got a friend—a sort of business manager, she calls him—rather a cad of a fellow, I think—and—er——

PHYLL. *He* does.

IMP. Yes—yes—He's quite right—and all that, of course—but—I—well, I don't exactly know how much I've got to settle. I expect I'm pretty well off—but—that, of course, up to now has been Dick's affair.

PHYLL. What will Dick say?

IMP. Ah—that's it.

PHYLL. You haven't told him?

IMP. Of course, I haven't—not yet—he couldn't understand.

PHYLL. Why couldn't he?

IMP. Oh, what could a fellow like Dick know about love, and all that!

PHYLL. Ah—what, indeed?

IMP. It's awfully good of you to take it so well, Phyl—it is indeed—not one girl in a hundred would have been such a brick.

PHYLL. I feel it very deeply, Richard—but I show nothing I—I am very proud; if—if—this blow should happen to change my nature,—I—I—shall do something great—I—I'll go on the stage. My name shall be in every man's mouth, my photograph on every man's mantelpiece, my face in every shop window and my figure in full upon every wall. I've got a tendency that way, I know, because, when a week ago an old man with a long brush and a pail pasted on the boarding opposite this window a poster of a glorious creature—an ideal woman with crimson limbs and flame coloured hair, something seemed to wake up inside me, and as I watched the figure standing boldly out limb by limb against a background of gauzy drapery—I realized how narrow was life's look-out for me. How could I hope to win and keep the love of an honest man—and now it has all come true. Oh, Imp, Imp, if years ago I had cast to the winds all petticoats and prudery, I might have proved worthy of you now. But—but—as it is, I must school myself to think that all is for the best.

IMP. Well, of course, it is no good crying over spilt milk, is it, Phyl—and—and—it's awfully odd you should mention her—but—it—that's she——

PHYLL. (*looking up at him as if completely bewildered*) She— (*then in an awed whisper*) The one on the wall?

(*He nods.*)

Oh, Imp—she loves you?

IMP. Yes—it—it somehow takes my breath away when I think of it.

PHYLL. (*after a pause*) Oh, Richard, where will you be able to keep such a wonderful thing as that?

IMP. I haven't spoken to her about it yet—but I've been looking about for a flat.

PHYLL. (*with a shudder*) A flat! You couldn't—you couldn't—that would be terrible—don't you see? Can't you feel how terrible that would be?

IMP. Well—we must make a beginning somewhere—mustn't we?

PHYLL. It seems such a waste to keep her in one flat.

IMP. She—she's a good deal more homely than you'd think she is from that picture you know.

PHYLL. Ah?

(MRS. ERICSON *calls from the other room.*)

MRS. E. Phyllis, dear—you'll make the hock cup, won't you?

PHYLL. Yes, mother, I'm coming— (*then, in a whisper*) Does *she* make hock cup, Richard?

IMP. I don't know.

PHYLL. You've drunk so much of mine—but—I don't mean to reproach you, Imp, I don't, indeed—perhaps you wouldn't have if you'd known how everything was going to turn out.

IMP. (*suddenly*) Great Scott!

PHYLL. What is it?

IMP. That letter—I forgot. I must find it. I came home on purpose.

PHYLL. There was a letter picked up behind the coats in the hall.

IMP. Where is it?

PHYLL. Dick has it.

IMP. (*with horror*) Dick!

PHYLL. Does it matter?

IMP. Oh, my goodness—suppose he should read it!

PHYLL. (*loftily*) People with any sense of honour don't read other people's letters.

IMP. But—but—this was a fearfully private letter.
PHYLL. Oh, of course, that does make a difference.

(DICK *enters—a pause.*)

DICK. (*gravely to* IMP) Will you come to my study, I want to have a talk with you.
PHYLL. (*quickly seeing the* IMP'S *dismay*) He can't come now. He has something very important to do for me.
DICK. But—
PHYLL. It's very important, Dick. Go at once, Imp.
IMP. (*looking at her gratefully*) I—I must go now, Dick—I—I—won't be long.
DICK. Very well. (*he goes to the window and looks out listlessly*)

(PHYLLIS *watches him mischievously.*)

PHYLL. Is it a good likeness, Dick?
DICK. (*not understanding*) What?
PHYLL. The picture on the wall.

(DICK *catches her meaning, and with a groan pulls the blind down and leaves the window.*)

(*very gravely*) I should have thought that you were the last man in the world to fall in love with that sort of woman.
DICK. (*shortly*) Oh.
PHYLL. Yes—it only proves to me how right mother always is.
DICK. What do you mean?
PHYLL. You see, mother having been married—knows a great deal about men.
DICK. Ah!
PHYLL. And she isn't a bit surprised.
DICK. Isn't she? I'm glad.
PHYLL. No—she says the quiet, fair men are generally like that.
DICK. Like what?
PHYLL. Oh— you know—easily attracted by—by pictures on the wall.
DICK. I didn't know your mother was so observant.
PHYLL. Because you're going to be married, you needn't be rude to my mother.
DICK. I wasn't rude to your mother.

PHYLL. I think you were—you mayn't have meant it, Dick—but I think you decidedly were——

DICK. Oh, don't worry me, dear—I—I'm not in the mood to-day.

PHYLL. Poor old Dick—have you got a headache?

DICK. Yes.

PHYLL. Then I won't worry—I—I'll be very sympathetic. I—I'll let you tell me about yourself—and—and your plans for the future with your wife that is to be.

(DICK *groans a little.*)

She—she seems to be very beautiful, Dick. Is she really as beautiful as that?

DICK. I suppose so.

PHYLL. Oh, you must know. "Suppose so" sounds so cold—perhaps you don't like talking about her to me, do you mind talking about her to me, Dick?

DICK. No.

PHYLL. I wonder do you love her as much as I love the Imp?

DICK. I daresay.

PHYLL. Isn't it beautiful, being in love, Dick—doesn't it make one feel good and peaceful—and—and sunshiny. Don't you glow all over with pride and happiness every time you see that picture on the wall.

DICK. No, I don't, if you really want to know.

PHYLL. Don't you—how odd. I should love to see a picture of the Imp on the wall—that size.

DICK. Would you?

PHYLL. Yes, and every time I saw a crowd of ladies looking at it I should say to myself—look away ladies, all that belongs to me. Just how you must feel when you see everybody—even the policeman, looking at *your* future wife's picture. Do you approve of the drapery being so—so far away?

DICK. No.

PHYLL. I'm glad you don't, because I don't either.

DICK. Will you kindly be quiet? I'm not in the mood for this sort of talk.

PHYLL. Dick.

DICK. Oh, run away, there's a dear—I've lots of things to think about.

PHYLL. You've lost your temper.

DICK. I daresay I have.

PHYLL. Well, as you've lost your temper and prac-

tically told me to leave the room—I won't try to be nice to you any more.

DICK. That's a good thing.

PHYLL. Is it? And I'll tell the truth to you now. I think it's disgusting your being in love with a woman like that.

DICK. I daresay.

PHYLL. And if it had been any one I'd been really fond of——

DICK. (*rising*) If—if it had been the Imp?

PHYLL. (*proudly*) That's impossible, the Imp is engaged to me, but if it had been the Imp, even the Imp—no matter how much I loved him, I'd never have spoken to him again.

DICK. Would it break your heart never to speak to him again?

PHYLL. That's a curious question for you to ask, considering that our marriage has been almost entirely arranged by you.

DICK. (*sadly*) Yes—yes—I know.

PHYLL. I think it's rather mean to suggest to me of all people that the Imp *could* do such a thing.

DICK. I didn't.

PHYLL. I'm in error again, I suppose, or my hearing must be defective.

DICK. Oh, do leave me alone.

PHYLL. You won't be worried with me much longer. After I'm married and you're married, I don't suppose we shall see much of each other, for I don't think either the Imp or I would ever be likely to be very friendly with the red lady on the wall.

DICK. Have you done?

PHYLL. Very nearly. I don't mind telling you that now mother's worst suspicions are confirmed, it's just possible that her principles won't allow us to trespass on your hospitality much longer.

DICK. Oh, and how long has your mother had these suspicions of me, may I ask?

PHYLL. Oh, about three years.

DICK. Ever since you've been living here—eating my bread and——

PHYLL. We didn't eat much bread.

DICK. It's a pity your mother didn't realize what a bad lot I was a year or two sooner.

PHYLL. Oh, I think she did—but she often said to me—it wasn't wise to throw out dirty water before we'd got in clean. (*a pause—she says softly, thinking she*

has gone too far) Dick, that isn't true. She never said that.

DICK. (*wearily*) No, I don't suppose she did.

(*He is sitting listlessly, very tired, very dejected, looking at the pattern on the carpet.* PHYLLIS *goes to the door—turns and stands looking lovingly at him for a moment, then, with a little happy silent laugh, she creeps quietly to the back of his chair, throws her arms round his neck and kissing him gently, runs from the room.* DICK *looks up, startled—half rises, then sinks back again.*)

Now, what made her do a silly thing like that? (*he runs his fingers hopelessly through his hair*)

(SIR H. *comes in from the study.*)

SIR H. Isn't he about?

DICK. He's just gone out to get something for Phyl.

SIR H. It's a bit of a facer, isn't it?

DICK. On my soul, I don't quite know where to begin.

SIR H. I don't expect it's anything very serious—boys will be boys.

DICK. He is engaged to be married to the sweetest girl in England.

SIR H. Oh, I don't defend it.

DICK. (*going to the window and pulling up the blind—then again remembering the poster*) Damn the poster.

(*The bell rings.*)

There he is.

(*The* MAID *goes to the hall door and opens it.*)

DOCTOR. (*heard off*) Any one at home?

DICK. It's Terry and the Soldier-Man.

(*He goes out into the hall.*)

Morning, you fellows—You're just in time.

S. MAN. Morning, Dick—where's Waddles?

DICK. He's here—we—we're all here, you're just in time for a council of war. (*he comes down*)

DOCTOR. (*to the* S. MAN) Corporal—it's all out.

S. MAN. Council of war—good—what's the trouble, Dick?

DICK. Sit down!

(*They sit down.*)

Read this.

S. MAN. (*glancing at letter*) To you?

DICK. No, to the Imp.

(*He hands the letter to the* DOCTOR, *who reads it in silence—and gives a low whistle.*)

DOCTOR. Shall I——

DICK. (*grimly*) Pass it on.

(*The* DOCTOR *hands it to* COL. GRAHAME, *who also reads it and grunts—offers it to* WADDLES.)

SIR H. Not again, thank you.

(*The* SOLDIER-MAN *puts it on the table and there is a moment's silence.*)

DOCTOR. What sort of looking woman is she?

DICK. Judge!

(*He goes up to the window, the three men follow him and follow the direction of his pointing finger.*)

SIR H. (*gazes placidly at the poster, then murmurs to himself*) Very—very soothing.

S. MAN. The Firefly! by all that's damnable.

DICK. Is she——

S. MAN. (*answering the unspoken question*) Quite one of the most notorious.

DICK. (*facing the three silent men*) And now I shall be glad to know what we are going to do.

DOCTOR. How did you find it out?

DICK. Mrs. Ericson picked up that letter, read it, handed it on to Phyllis, who also read it and handed it on to me.

DOCTOR. To Phyllis! Good God—and she engaged to him!

S. MAN. Poor girl! What a blow for her.

DICK. That's the one slice of luck in the whole miserable business.

DOCTOR. Doesn't she care for him?

DICK. Of course, she worships him.

DOCTOR. Then where's the slice of luck?

DICK. They think the lady is in love with me.

OMNES. What!

DICK. (*taking up letter*) "Dick." I'm Dick. The Imp's Richard, too, but he's never Dick to us—he's the Imp. So I'm—thanks to that trivial misunderstanding—the future husband of that scarlet horror stuck up on the wall. However, that doesn't matter, my shoulders are broad enough to bear even that. I'm all right, it's the Imp's got to be looked after, or else he'll burn his fingers. Good God, I've rescued from danger before I've seen him through scarlet fever—diphtheria—all the other ills of his babyhood—this is a very similar sort of complaint, and if we can't pull him through, his father was a poor judge of guardians when he gave the boy to us. We'll talk to him—we'll open his juvenile eyes—we'll——

S. MAN. Do you suppose we'll succeed in convincing him?

(*A long pause.*) ..

DICK. (*wearily*) No. I don't suppose we shall—— at first. We've got to put this thing right, ye know. We're responsible to Charlie for the boy's life and we'll take jolly good care he doesn't spoil it by this sort of thing.

S. MAN. Phyllis must be considered—wouldn't it be as well to let their marriage be broken off for the present?

DICK. Man alive, if she knew he'd—he'd turned his attention to this sort of thing, she'd never speak to him again—she's as proud as Lucifer.

SIR H. Are you sure she loves him?

DICK. Certain. I asked her just now—she was rounding on me about it—telling me how contemptible she thought it all—and—and—and I asked her what she'd have done if—if it had been the Imp—and she said that she'd give him up and hate him forever—though she knew it would break her heart.

S. MAN. Um! That does make it awkward, doesn't it?

SIR H. Well, there's fact one she loves him—now then—fact two is he doesn't love her. And fact three, they certainly ought not to be married under such conditions.

DICK. No, no—you're going all wrong. You're wrong

in saying he doesn't love her—he does in his heart of hearts. This (*pointing to the window*)—sort of thing is—isn't pleasant, of course, but it—it's only his youth you know. We all seem to go through it—at least so I'm told. When he finds out what it's all worth he'll sicken of it, damn quick, and then he'll marry and settle down—and—and—be the man we all want to see him.

DOCTOR. Do you think that sort of thing (*pointing to poster*) is a necessary part of a young man's education?

DICK. Certainly not, but now that he has tumbled into the water, let's pick him out and dry him as quickly as we can.

SIR H. I don't think it will do him any harm.

DOCTOR. And I'm sure it won't do him any good.

(*The door opens and the* IMP *enters quietly—he glances at the four men—closes the door behind him and comes slowly down into the room.*)

IMP. You—(*he clears his throat*) You are all very solemn—are you talking about me?

DICK. Yes.

IMP. I—I dropped a letter.

DICK. Here it is.

(*The* IMP *takes it, folds it up—and puts it in his pocket—he then strolls with affected nonchlance to the fireplace and lights a cigarette—a pause.*)

(*slowly*) I have read your letter.

IMP. (*looking at him as if greatly astonished*) *You* have read my letter?

DICK. (*gravely*) Yes.

SIR H. We've all read your letter.

IMP. Really? I always thought there were some things gentlemen did *not* do.

DICK. (*gently*) Don't let's begin like this. You know that we four would do anything in the world to help you.

IMP. Even to reading my letters. I'm grateful.

S. MAN. So you ought to be. There are damn few boy's letters I'd take the trouble to read.

IMP. I hope you all found it interesting.

DOCTOR. (*slowly*) We did that.

(*A pause—none of the Quadrity know quite how to begin—the* IMP'S *attitude has rather upset their calculations. The* IMP *blows a few rings of smoke and*

waves them aside gracefully with his hand, then says enquiringly.)

IMP. Well—and now?

DICK. Now we—we want you to tell us all about it.

IMP. Surely, the letter doesn't leave me much to tell.

DICK. It leaves a great deal. Come, come, old man—we've all been young 'uns in our time—let's have your version of this little love story.

IMP. There is very little to tell. I have asked Miss Glynesk——

S. MAN. The Firefly.

IMP. (*gives him a glance and continues*) I have asked Miss Glynesk to be my wife, and she has done me the honour to say all right.

SIR H. Oh, has she?

SIR H. Devil doubt her!

DICK. Yes—I—I gathered that from the letter—but—but—you see, old man—there are many things to be considered—things, that in your impetuosity you may have overlooked. Now here we are—four sober-minded, middle-aged men—whose—well, I know I'm in this speaking for myself—whose principal thought in life is to try and make things smooth for you. That's so, isn't it, you chaps?

S. MAN. Certainly.

SIR H. Quite so.

DOCTOR. It is that.

IMP. I know, of course, I know all about that, and I don't want you to think I'm a conceited young ass—but there comes a time in every man's life when his own judgment is of greater use to him than other people's.

DICK. Perhaps this is not that time.

IMP. I think it is. (*then there is a pause and the* IMP *throws his cigarette, half finished, into the fireplace*)

DICK. (*slowly*) What does your own judgment prompt you to do?

IMP. To marry the woman I love.

S. MAN. The Firefly.

DICK. She—she is a good deal older than you are—isn't she, old man?

IMP. She is a little older.

DICK. (*slowly*) And I hear—that she has seen a good deal of the world.

IMP. I believe she has travelled a great deal.

SIR H. (*chiming in*) I suppose you know that people say——

IMP. (*interrupting*) I should have thought, Sir Horace, you'd have learnt by this time to pay no attention to what "people say"—for myself, when I know a person, I form my own judgment—and—"People can say" what they please—for all I care.

DICK. You're right—you're quite right, of course—but in this instance——

IMP. (*breaking in*) Look here. I know you were all great friends of my father—and you've been jolly good to me and all that, but on this subject, I may as well tell you I shouldn't have allowed even him to interfere—it's my affair, and I've made up my mind about it.

DICK. (*gently*) You're wrong, old man—nothing in this life is ever entirely one's own affair. Nobody can ever say, I stand alone—every step you take in life, whether towards evil or towards good, reacts upon your surroundings. Now I—oh, good God! you know I don't want to preach—I couldn't, I'm not built that way—I only want you to be—well, here we are, five fellows—let's all talk this matter over, find out what's the best thing to do and make up our minds, whether we like it or not, to do it. If it's best for you to marry this lady—marry her, and good luck to you—if it's best not to marry her—don't; let's hammer it out amongst us. Your father—the dearest, bravest, truest chap that ever stepped in shoe leather—gave you into our keeping when you were so high—we swore among ourselves to make you worthy of him—and we're going to try to keep our word.

IMP. Is it making me worthy of him to try and make me break my promise to a woman?

S. MAN. (*quietly*) Which woman—which promise, you have given two.

(*The shot goes home. The* IMP *looks at him for a moment, then turns away—and leans his head against his arms on the mantelpiece, then speaks brokenly, after a pause.*)

IMP. I—you can't ask me to marry a woman I don't love—I thought I did once—but I didn't—I know that now.

S. MAN. You got engaged to her.

IMP. I—I was a fool—but—but everybody seemed to think it was all right—Dick wished it—you all wished it—and—and— (*in a low voice*) she seemed to wish it, too.

SIR H. (*jumps up, excited*) You young cad—do you——

DICK. (*restraining him*) Hush!

IMP. (*breaking in hotly*) Oh, I don't mean that she *said* so. I merely mean, everybody seemed to expect it—and—and—we drifted into it. I'm very sorry and all that, of course—but it's done, and it can't be helped.

DICK. It can be helped. Now, listen——

IMP. (*getting rather flustrated—quickly*) Oh, it's no good talking—you may just as well realize that in this matter I'll listen to no one. I know what a good friend you've been to me, Dick, and I'm grateful—but I'm no longer a boy. I'm old enough to manage my own affairs, and I intend to do it.

S. MAN. (*breaking in brightly*) Of course—we're all on the wrong tack, Dick, old fellow, we've been mounting the high horse and talking to the Imp as if he were a child. He isn't, he's a man of the world as we are—except that he's handicapped by being in love—we aren't . Now then, Imp—let's have your view of the situation as a man of the world. So it is absolutely essential to your happiness that you—er—*marry* this lady?

IMP. (*shortly*) Yes.

S. MAN. Then you must have put your case before her very clumsily.

IMP. (*fiercely*) What do you mean?

S. MAN. I don't think she has ever been approached with ceremony before.

IMP. (*starts forward furiously*) You coward!

(*All the men rise except the* SOLDIER MAN.)

D(*silencing them all with a shout*) Stop there!'

IMP. (*passionately*) Don't believe it, Dick—don't believe it—it isn't true.

DICK. Hush! Hush! Let's talk it out quietly—for pity's sake.

IMP. I won't stand quietly here and hear the woman I love insulted, even by you.

S. MAN. Quite right—and if I told you certain facts concerning this lady's past, and gave you my honour that they were facts, you wouldn't believe me.

IMP. I'd know that they were lies.

S. MAN. Quite right. Now that we know where we are—I can hold my tongue.

IMP. You'd better.

(*The* SOLDIER-MAN *laughs—there is going to be another outbreak—again* DICK *checks it.*)

DICK. Stop this, I say.

IMP. Yes, I will stop this once and for all—I'll go.

DICK. Where?

IMP. To her! I'll get her to fix our wedding day once and for all.

DICK. (*springs to the door and intercepts him*) Not yet. Not yet!

IMP. You can't keep me. I'm of age—I do as I choose now.

DICK. Listen——

IMP. I've listened till I'm tired—what's the use of staying here with my hands behind my back while the woman I love is insulted?

DICK. No—no!

IMP. (*stamping*) I say yes— (*a pause, then very quietly*) Let me go, please, Dick.

DICK. (*gently*) We—we're all a little excited now, old man—when you come back——

IMP. (*slowly*) I shall not come back.

(*A pause.*)

DICK. (*looks at him and at last speaks with an effort*) You will not come back?

IMP. What's the use? I love her—nobody understands.

DICK. You—you want to go away from me?

IMP. I don't "want" to. You leave me no choice—you believe what he says— (*he points to* COL. GRAHAME *—a pause*) Don't you?

DICK. (*slowly*) Yes.

IMP. (*with a little choke*) Then wouldn't you despise me if I stayed?

(*There is a pause and* DICK *slowly moves away from the door and down towards the fireplace. The* IMP *stands irresolute for a moment, as if there was something he would like to say—but the thought fails to find expression, and he turns to go—at the door he stops and turns to* DICK *pleadingly.*)

You—you've been very good to me, Dick—I—I'm going to her—won't you wish me luck?

DICK. (*after a pause, says huskily*) I—I'm thinking of your father—if she is worthy of him—worthy of

you—then, good luck to you, Imp—good luck. (*He buries his head on his folded arms*)

IMP. (*gladly*) Thanks, Dick, thanks. I'll tell her what you say. (*and he turns and darts out, slamming the door*)

(*They all rise except* DICK.)

S. MAN. Great Scott, Dick—what do you mean by that?

DICK. God knows—the boy may be right, after all—he knows the woman—I don't.

S. MAN. (*emphatically*) I *do*—she's been the ruin of half a dozen men of my acquaintance.

DICK. No—no!

S. MAN. I tell you, yes; if the boy wants to marry her, she'll marry him—spend his money—then he who bids more will carry her off, husband or no husband. She's for sale, I tell you—for sale. To be bought as one would buy a flower.

DICK. (*starting up fiercely—striking the table with his fist*) Is she? Then, I'll buy her—I'll buy her—she's mine—she shan't belong to him and wreck his life—she shall belong to me, if the price is high—stand by me——

SIR H. Mine's yours.

DOCTOR. And mine.

S. MAN. And mine!

DICK. Good men! The Trinity sees this through.

QUICK CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*A gaudily furnished room. Many photographs of The Firefly. A flaming red poster pinned to the curtains; a table, carpet on the centre of stage, and much debris about; soda water bottles and a tantalus lying on the floor—the room giving every evidence of having been the scene of a disturbance.*

(*Various lithos of* KARA *on walls and floor in her various big parts.* BABETTE, *a French maid, viciously pretty, heard expostulating in* KARA'S *room.*)

BAB. Oh, Madame, mais c'est impossible—vraiment, vraiment, c'est impossible.

KARA. (*off*) I don't care if it is—it's got to be done. Look alive now, look alive!

(BABETTE *enters.*)

BAB. Oh, I 'ate air. I ate 'air! An' she 'ave spilt de table—Oh, I say—too bad—too bad—too bad! (*picking up the things*) She 'ave crack 'im—so stoopid! so very stoopid! I 'ate air!

(*Bells rings.*)

Dat is Mistaire Ughie's ring. Oh, he will catch it 'ot —so 'ot! pretty quick, I tell 'im!

(*Goes up and out at back. Hall door heard to open and* HUGHIE'S *voice.*)

BABETTE. Hello, Babette, what's all the bobbery?

BAB. Oh, mon Dieu, mon Dieu, mon Dieu!

HUGHIE. (*enters*) Mon Dieu-ing ain't enlightening, Babette. I repeat, what's the bobbery? (*he looks round at the disordered room*) Hello—been havin' a bit of a beano here, ain't you?

BAB. Beano! Oh, mon Dieu! dat word is much too

little. You know quite soon—pretty dam quick. Vas Madame's brougham at ze door?

HUGHIE. Yes.

BAB. Good! (*she goes to door*) Ze carriage is waiting, Madame.

KARA. Let it wait!

BAB. (*picks up some broken china*) Look, she crack 'im in her rage. I sink she crack you, too, pretty dam quick, too.

HUGHIE. Crack me? Really that seems superfluous, considering she broke me a few years ago. Again I enquire solicitously, what is the bobbery?

BAB. (*with meaning*) I think you know.

HUGHIE. Well, if you put it like that—I think I do.

BAB. She sent for you, eh?

HUGHIE. To be sent for by the Firefly is a distinction.

BAB. This time it is an extinction, my frien'.

HUGHIE. Your English is getting quite encyclopædic.

BAB. Encyclopædic? I do not know him. Madame have sent for ze ozair damn fool, too.

HUGHIE. (*sitting up*) Wallis?

BAB. Wallis. Oui, oui, oui—oh yes. She crack 'im, too, I 'ope so.

HUGHIE. Again superfluous. Our firefly likewise broke him beyond any riveting exactly four months before she performed the same operation for me—but, tell me why this craving to jump upon the pieces now?

BAB. You know, you—you little peeg—you have played a trick on us. What was it you both tell her about zat nice little boy—ze Imp boy?

HUGHIE. Young Audaine? Oh, only a few facts about his great wealth.

BAB. (*with a squeal*) His wealth—is—oh—if you was not so infant, so young, I would like to say some sings in my own language. It was your plot—Mr. Wallis' plot—*his* plot—little damn fool! He swear he was so rich, so rich—five thousand a year to come soon. She, Madame, lose her head—she believe, and she get what you call hustle, and she have——

HUGHIE. (*springing to his feet with a shout of delight*) Not married him—don't tell me she's married him!

BAB. I tell you nozing. I leave dat to Madame—she tell you all damn quick.

(*Bell rings, and a faint cough heard.*)

Mr. Wallis! I know 'is cough—stoupid, stoupid, ally cough.

HUGHIE. "*almost to himself*" By Love! if we've bluffed her into that! what a score! Jumping Jehoshaphat, what a score!

(WALLIS *enters, in immaculate youth.*

WALLIS. Hello, Hughie! Firefly telegraphed for me to call.

HUGHIE. And for me. Wallis, my little one, she's swallowed it, hook and all, hook and all—we can call quits at last.

WALLIS. What! Has she—you don't——

HUGHIE. And our friend, the amorous youth——

WALLIS. She's not——

HUGHIE. She has—she's married him! She's married him! Christians awake! ain't there going to be a row.

BAR. Zare has been a row already. She 'ave turned 'im out of doors.

HUGHIE. Already!

BAR. Dey was married dis morning.

WALLIS. Who was present?

BAR. Only I—me—was. Oh, it is a grand secret. No one at all know, save Madame, Monsieur et moi.

HUGHIE. My word, when his people find out, won't there be a shindy!

BAR. He have not told zem yet. By Gar, I don't think he evaire tell anyone at all now—after what occur zis afternoon.

HUGHIE. You mean to say she turned him out of doors?

BAR. Ah, oui—pourquoi non?

WALLIS. But her husband—whoop! wouldn't I have liked to have been present!

HUGHIE. Get on, Babette, you're slow enough to be English. Tell us what happened?

BAR. Well, zis is it. Aftaire ze ceremony, zay come home 'ere and have a little lunch—quite charming—oh, quite nice—but Monsieur 'e seem to 'ave somesing on his mind.

WALLIS. Should think he had just!

BAR. But still all vaire charming, vaire nice! After lunch zey come in here and Madame Kara smoke a cigarette—'e light it for her—vaire nice—vaire charming—zen, all of a sudden, Madame take his hand. Forgive her, she say, she very extravagant woman, and she

go to ze bureau and she take out all zese. (*pointing to letters of all sorts and conditions that are scattered about the room*)

HUGHIE. What are those?

BAB. Bills, bills, bills—all zem is damn nasty bills. Oh, I 'ate bills! And she says to Monsieur, in such a sweet, sweet way, dat he will forgive her not mentioning zem before—zey slip 'er memory—and she know he will pay zem all at once—so nice of 'im.

WALLIS. Go on—go on—this is great!

HUGHIE. What then?

BAB. Zen it was mos' surprisin'—suddenly he springs up an' zrow out 'is arms, and say wiz passion: "I 'ave deceive you, I am not rich man, only poor man rich in love. I love you, I love you, I am liar, cheat, blackguard, but I love you—all I 'ave is I love you.

HUGHIE. AND WALLIS. } And then?

(*A pause*—BABETTE *says very quietly.*)

BAB. (*quaintly*) You 'ave met Madame!

HUGHIE. AND WALLIS. } What happened?

BAB. (*softly*) Oh, a few little sings 'appen—just a few. (*she points to broken china*) I feel sorry for ze boy—ze—Oh, I mus' say I feel sorry for ze husband—she strike him full—once, twice, three times.

HUGHIE. (*quietly*) What did he do?

BAB. (*gravely*) He stand quite still—ver' white—ver' white and ver', ver still, and look at her wiz his great, sad eyes, and—and he bow his head.

(*Bell rings violently.*)

Madame's bell! I come, pretty so damn quick, I come.

(*She exits hurriedly.*)

HUGHIE. By Jove, who would have thought she'd have been fooled so easily?

WALLIS. Greed, old son, greed—they're all alike. Dangle a golden plum and they'll gollop it down and chance the indigestion—and I must say we played our cards very well. There was every excuse for her believin' the young 'un was a bally little gold mine.

HUGHIE. An' of course, when he didn't deny it, she——

WALLIS. Oh, we're brainy little fellahs, both of us—ain't we, little son?

HUGHIE. I'm brainy enough to think it wiser to (*pantomimes "getting out"*) before her ladyship has her little chat with us. You see, one must never neglect precedent, and she hit him — once, twice, three times. And I never was good in the ring. Will you——

WALLIS. Oh, let's see her—she'll be deuced waxy—and the laugh's up to us now.

HUGHIE. But the one, two, three——

WALLIS. Chance it, little son—we're both of us pretty dodgy. I wonder what she'll do about it? Married to that kid without a farthing—gad, it's a rare lark! What the devil will his people say when they hear of it! It's pretty rough on them.

HUGHIE. Yes, she isn't exactly an acquisition to a domestic circle.

(HUGHIE *has been up at back helping himself to whiskey and soda.*)

Have one? It's about the last time we'll drink with the Firefly—we ain't so popular as we were.

WALLIS. Better fortify myself for the meeting. (*he helps himself*) Heard the news about Jimmy Hirsch?

HUGHIE. Bankrupt?

WALLIS. No, on top again—cleared fourteen thou. over a Caranian deal. He'll be buzzin' around the Firefly again before you know where you are—that's my prophecy, little son.

HUGHIE. If Jimmy Hirsch has got the dibs that means good-bye to little Hubby. 'Pon my soul, I b'lieve Jimmy Hirsch is the only man Firefly ever cared a brass button for.

(*Bell rings.*)

HUGHIE. Perhaps this is the redoubtable James.

WALLIS. What'll *he* say to the marriage?

HUGHIE. That also will be interesting to observe.

(BABETTE *crosses and opens door. A handsome, rather loud voiced girl enters in ball dress.*)

BUDGIE. Isn't your mistress ready, Babette?

BAB. Not yet—not quite yet—it is only her 'air.

HUGHIE. AND WALLIS. Hello, Budgie.

BUDGIE. Hello, you chaps, aren't you coming to Covent Garden?

HUGHIE. Later.

WALLIS. Kara has, what she is pleased to call, business with us.

(KARA *calls.*)

KARA. Babette! Babette!

BAB. I come.

HUGHIE. Oh, we must tell Budgie—it's too rich.

BUDGIE. Fire away.

HUGHIE. You know the young chap Kara met at the races—you were there.

BUDGIE. The boy who blushed if one said "Boo."

WALLIS. That's the chap—ward of a barrister, Carewe.

BUDGIE. Well, what of it?

HUGHIE. It's the rarest thing you ever heard—come here and I'll whisper. Kara married him secretly this morning, so I'm told.

BUDGIE. What!!

WALLIS. Isn't it regal? I tell you, Hughie and I deserve a medal—we spoofed her clean.

BUDGIE. Kara married him? Nonsense! He hasn't a sixpence.

HUGUIE. We know that—that's where the joke comes in. Our Firefly was led to believe that the young 'un was a bally little gold mine.

BUDGIE. (*amazed and delighted*) You don't mean to say she—oh, go on—go on—what a lark!

WALLIS. 'Course, Hughie and I are very fond of the Firefly, but well, she didn't let either of us down too gently, did she? So when she told us about this youth wantin' to marry her, we got this brilliant idea. Hughie dropped a hint about his colossal prospects, and I chimed in with a bit on my own——

HUGHIE. Then we got hold of the youth——

WALLIS. And having convinced him that she'd send him to the right—about if he hadn't £5000 a year——

HUGHIE. He apparently posed as the possessor of many but imaginary millions, sooner than get the push.

BUDGIE. By Jove, it's ripping! What a sell for Kara—won't she be sick!

HUGHIE. I think she is.

BUDGIE. (*bubbling over with suppressed delight, goes quickly to door of Kara's room and calls*) Kara, dear, I can't wait—I positively can't wait—I'll take a hansom.

KARA. All right.

BUDGIE. I must get there before she does—it's one of the best stories I've ever had a chance to tell. By-by, boys—we shall all meet later, if there's anything left of you when she's had her little say. By-by.

HUGHIE AND WALLIS. By-by.

HUGHIE. Sweet girl!

WALLIS. Sympathetic little soul!

(*Enter* BABETTE.)

BAB. Madame comes—en garde, Messieurs—she is very calm.

(*Exit* BABETTE *at back.*)

WALLIS. Calm!—Rather wish we hadn't stayed, don't you?

HUGHIE. She always was rather—difficult—when she calm. Wally, my son, one toast before we expire—Here's wishing all women where they ought to be.

WALLIS. Where's that?

HUGHIE. Well, I was goin' to say the bottom of the sea, but it would be such a doocid chilly process callin' on 'em.

(KARA *heard calling* "BABETTE.")

WALLIS. Buck up! She's coming.

(*They link arms and stand with their backs to the fire.* KARA *enters.*)

KARA. Oh, you're here?

WALLIS. Hello, Kara.

HUGHIE. You look beautiful, ma belle.

KARA. I want just five minutes' chat with you two boys.

WALLIS. Delighted—only too delighted!

HUGHIE. We're in luck, ain't we, old friend?

KARA. Do you know what you are—yes, the pair of you?

HUGHIE. Liars?

WALLIS. Do tell us what we've done.

KARA. You know. You think you've both been clever—you will find your joke a poor one before I've done. He has told me everything—he has nothing—nothing whatever. Oh, I don't blame him—the young fool is in love with me—lies were his only chance, but if the power is ever given me to repay you two, I'll flay you for your joke—I'll flay you! You can remember that.

HUGHIE. Such remarks make general conversation just a little difficult—don't you think, ma belle?

WALLIS. I—I—er—well, I positively don't know where to look, and that's a fact, old son.

HUGHIE. Ain't he really got any fortune, Kara?

KARA. As if you didn't know.

HUGHIE. Then, 'pon my word, it just shows how difficult it is to believe in appearances.

WALLIS. We thought he was a gold mine, didn't we?

HUGHIE. I'd have backed my boots on it—after all we'd heard.

KARA. (*looking at them with scorn*) I sent for you to tell you what I thought of you. I wanted to—but now you're here and I look at you, I wonder why I can be angry with such things as you—you're not men, or if you are, then men are such worms that I don't wonder that it's a glory to some of us to trample you underfoot.

HUGHIE. Not worms, ma belle, not worms—don't trample worms. Call us grapes, ma belle, not worms—beautiful, beautiful grapes—then crush us under your feet and give us to the world in wine—charming—quite charming. I'm in rather good form, ain't I, old son? (*he hums jovially "Oh, call us the fine Muscatel" to the tune of "They Call Me the Belle of New York."*)

(BABETTE *enters hurriedly.*)

BAB. Madame will pardon me——

KARA. What—what—what?

BAB. Madame get married in all such a hurry, she forget sings.

KARA. What's that?

BAB. Zis letter from Mr. Carewe.

HUGHIE. AND WALLIS. } Carewe!!

(KARA *is struggling angrily into pair of long gloves.*)

KARA. Carewe? Who is he?

BAB. Ze Unknown Man—ze lunatic—ze £1000.

KARA. Bah! Tear it up—who said I'd see him?

BAB. Ze letter made Madame so laugh. *Madame* said "I will see him," and he is coming to-night. I 'ad forgot. You fix the appointment. I post ze letter—but den we get married so damn quick—we forgot sings.

KARA. Send him away. I'm not in the mood to laugh at fools to-night.

BAB. He is, of course, fool. But £1000—that not so fool.

KARA. Who wants his £1000.

BAB. Madame does.

KARA. Quite right—so I do.

WALLIS. Unknown man?

HUGHIE. £1000.

WALLIS. Carewe, too. What's up?

KARA. (*fiercely*) Give me the letter. (*she snatches it and reads, then laughs*) It's preposterous! No man could be such a fool.

HUGHIE. May we know?

KARA. What's it got to do with you? (*she reads again*) £1000—what if he should mean it—it—what if it shouldn't be a joke?

BAB. I think him no joke—it read like great sense to me.

KARA. It would to a fool like you. Shall I see him?

(*A pause—again she looks at the letter.*)

What time did I say I'd see him?

BAB. Just now—it is on the strike.

KARA. Oh, is it? (*a pause, then suddenly*) I won't see him! I've had enough worry for one day. My cloak, Babette. I'm going to the ball.

BAB. Mais Madame—!

KARA. My cloak, I say.

BAB. Oh, mon Dieu, mon Dieu—!

(*She picks up cloak from chair; as she puts it on* KARA *she whispers.*)

£1000 is a £1000—Madame forgets. Suppose he mean it? Sousand pounds——

(*The outdoor bell rings.*)

He is yere!

(*A pause; they all look at each other; then suddenly* KARA *flings off her cloak.*)

KARA. Hang it all—I'll see him! Get out, you two!
HUGHIE. But, Kara——
WALLIS. Ma belle——
KARA. I'll settle our little score later; for the present—get out. I'm going to talk over a little business with this gentleman.
HUGHIE. I wonder would your husband quite approve.
KARA. (*comes to him—he moves behind chair*) Have you forgotten the old saying: "He laughs best who laughs last?" You'll both of you remember it yet. Good-night. Stop. I know nothing of this fellow. He *may* be a madman for all I know—wait there you two. If he's tame, I can manage him—if he isn't, you must—that's all.
WALLIS. (*aghast*) A madman!
HUGHIE. They have the strength of ten men.
KARA. What's his name again? (*looks at letter*) Richard Carewe—know him?
HUGHIE. Richard Carewe? (*to* W.) Do we?
WALLIS. Richard Carewe? (*to* H.) Do we?

(*A pause.*)

HUGHIE. No, we don't.
WALLIS. Never heard of him.

(KARA *talks to* BABETTE.)

WALLIS. (*to* HUGHIE) The Imp's guardian.
HUGHIE. Let's stay and see the fun.
WALLIS. Rather!
HUGHIE. What makes you think he's mad?
KARA. He has practically written and told me so. Into that room, please—you needn't come out unless I call you—into that room, please.
HUGHIE. Charmed, I'm sure, to be chucker-out.
WALLIS. Always ready to die in the cause of beauty in distress.
KARA. Thank you.—Into that room.

(*They retire into room,* L.)

KARA. (*to* BABETTE) Bring me the glass.

(BABETTE *brings her hand-glass and* KARA *arranges her hair.*)

All right.

(BABETTE *goes out, closing the door.* KARA *suddenly rises and goes to door of the room where the two men have retired, shaking her fist at it.*)

You've tricked me—you've tricked me—but you shall pay for it—you shall all pay for it—every man Jack of you!

(BABETTE *now returns with a card on tray.*)

(*takes it and reads*) Richard Carewe—what have you done with him?

BABETTE. He is in ze dining room.

KARA. Idiot! If you'd only use the little brains you've got, Babette, you would realize that I can't see Mr. Carewe through brick walls and a hall passage—bring him here.

BABETTE. Oui, Madame.

KARA. (*re-reading letter*) £1000, and he doesn't wish to see me—doesn't wish to talk to me. . . . . It's the most extraordinary proposition; I wonder what's his game?

BABETTE. (*announces*) Mr. Richard Carewe.

(DICK *enters.* KARA *rises and meets him—there is a slight pause.*)

KARA. How do you do, Mr. Carewe?

DICKN. How do you do?

(*Another pause.*)

KARA. I—I— (*laughs*) It's a little awkward, isn't it? Won't you sit down?

DICK. (*slowly*) You got my letter?

KARA. Oh, yes, I got your letter. Do you know, I pictured you quite a different sort of man. I thought you must be a very old man. (*pause*) Are you sane?

DICK. Perfectly.

KARA. Your proposition is—odd—isn't it?

DICK. I suppose it is.

KARA. I beg your pardon—would you like a whiskey and soda?

DICK. No, thank you.

KARA. (*taking up letter*) Here's your letter. Come now—it's a joke, isn't it?

DICK. No.

DICK. No.

KARA. You really mean it?

DICK. Absolutely.

KARA. (*slowly, looking at letter*) You will give me £1000 if I will make my friends believe that you are —a—friend of mine?

DICK. Yes.

KARA. (*referring to letter*) For a month, you desire that our names shall be linked together—dear me, how comic it seems! And during that time you do not wish to speak to me—nor even to see me?

(DICK *bows his head.*)

You must be quite mad, you know?

DICK. Do you accept my offer?

KARA. Well, one can hardly accept £1000 without seriously thinking it over, can one? What does it entail?

DICK. Nothing but what is expressed in the letter.

KARA. It seems just a little too good to be true, doesn't it? You don't happen to have brought the money with you, do you?

DICK. Yes—I told you in my letter that I would.

KARA. (*rising in amazement*) Then it's real—it's *not* a joke?

DICK. Why should I joke?

KARA. Well, upon my word— (*she stares at him*) Oh, I think I see the game. You want to waken my curiosity—to arouse my interest in you?

DICK. No.

KARA. Oh, yes, you do. Well, it's an expensive way, but I'm not sure that it's a bad one. (*she laughs*) Come now—I challenge you—you won't give me your word of honour that you will never seek to improve upon the conditions of your offer? That you'll never want to change your mind about not seeing me?

DICK. I give you my word of honour now.

KARA. Well, you're quite the oddest person I have ever come across. Let me see the money—convince me it isn't a dream.

DICK. (*taking out letter*) The money is here.

KARA. It's not a cheque, is it?
DICK. No, two bank notes.
KARA. By Jove—you do mean business.
DICK. Understand, from the time you take this our compact begins.
KARA. Quite so—and it holds good for one month.
DICK. Yes.
KARA. You know you've no earthly security that I shall earn this money.
DICK. Oh, yes, I have.
KARA. What?
DICK. Your sense of honour.
KARA. Is that meant for a joke?
DICK. No.

(*A pause.*)

KARA. You're a most extraordinary person.
DICK. Is it to be a bargain?
KARA. Yes. (*she holds out her hand for the notes*)
DICK. (*gives them to her*) Thank you. I—I can go now—we have met for the first and the last time. Good-bye.

(*A pause.*)

I must ask you to forgive me for—for this insult.
KARA. I like it, believe me. It's one of the pleasantest insults I've ever experienced.
DICK. But—but there is so much at stake.
KARA. What do you mean?
DICK. I—I cannot tell you.
KARA. It really doesn't matter—the money speaks—and between you and me and the post, I wanted it rather badly. Good-bye, Protector-of-the-Poor.
DICK. Good-bye.

(*The bell rings.*)

DICK. (*turns and says hesitatingly*) Some one——
KARA. Well? Oh, you don't want to be seen here, don't you? Is that it? You do good by stealth and blush to be caught on the stairs!

(BABETTE *is heard to open the door and exclaim in surprise.*)

BAB. Monsieur!

(*A man's voice is heard.*)

HIRSCH. Back again! Is she in?

KARA. (*starts up*) Hirsch! Jim! Back again! Back again! Quick—quick! do you mind?—go in there. I—I—this gentleman—I'd rather he didn't see you. Quick—just for a minute—do you mind.

(DICK *bows and goes into the other room,* R.)

KARA. Jim!—why has he come back? Why has he come back?

(*The door opens and* HIRSH *enters. He is a heavily-built, powerful-looking man of Jewish extraction. She stands rigid—he comes slowly down—a silence.*)

HIRSCH. Well?

KARA. How dare you come back?

HIRSCH. That's foolish—you knew I'd come sooner or later, didn't you?

KARA. I—I——

HIRSCH. Kara. (*he holds out his arms*)

KARA. No, no!

HIRSCH. What do you mean?

KARA. You must go—you must go—we—we—never again! (*fiercely*) It's over—I told you! (*she stamps*) I told you once and for all, it's over. Never again!

HIRSCH. Wrong—always again—always and always—and you know it.

KARA. Oh, why have you come back?

HIRSCH. You left me eight months ago because luck turned against me.

KARA. I left you because you were sold up. I'm not good at sleeping on bare boards.

HIRSCH. Luck has turned again—you must come back.

KARA. Must!

HIRSCH. Must! You know me—when I say a thing I mean it. We will go South to-morrow.

KARA. Not to-morrow.

HIRSCH. When will you be ready?

KARA. (*taking up letter, glancing at it, then slowly tearing it up*) I have just made a contract.

HIRSCH. For how long?

KARA. One month from to-day.

HIRSCH. It is too long—break it.

KARA. No—curiously enough, it's a contract I cannot break.

HIRSCH. Strange contract.

KARA. It is.

HIRSCH. What prevents you breaking it?

KARA. (*with a laugh*) My sense of honour.

HIRSCH. Rubbish!

KARA. I thought that would amuse you—it amuses me rather.

HIRSCH. Break it.

KARA. You must be patient.

HIRSCH. I have been patient for eight months. I have stifled every thought—I have shut myself up with my dream of you, and compelled the luck to turn. It has turned. We are £14,000 to the good. When that is gone, I will be patient again—for the present, we will go South to-morrow.

KARA. I have said no.

HIRSCH. Look at me.—It isn't wise to play the fool with me.

KARA. You must wait a month.

HIRSCH. I will wait until, to-morrow.

KARA. Don't be foolish—you bore me.

HIRSCH. It's no contract—it's a man.

(*Enter* IMP.)

KARA. What if it is—that's my affair!

HIRSCH. You dare!

KARA. My dear Jimmy, you're not the only man in the world, you know.

HIRSCH. Who is he?

KARA. You wouldn't know him.

HIRSCH. Who is he?

KARA. If you really wish to know, his name is Richard Carewe. (*she calls*) Mr. Carewe.

HIRSCH. (*starting forward fiercely*) He's there!—You love him.

(DICK *enters.*)

KARA. (*with a defiant laugh*) What if I do?

HIRSCH. (*throwing over the table*) You devil!

KARA. Help me! (*she backs to the sideboard*)

(HIRSCH *springs towards her with uplifted hand; simultaneously the* IMP *rushes down to stop him. Then* DICK, *by a quick movement, intercepts and seizes the boy.*

IMP. Keep back!
DICK. (*holding him*) Go home. This is my quarrel.

KARA *moves down* R.

You heard what she said. She's *mine.*
IMP. (*facing him in a blaze of anger*) Liar! She's my wife!

(*There is a long silence.* HUGHIE, WALLIS *and* BABETTE *have entered.* DICK *turns slowly to* KARA.

DICK. Is this true?
KARA. Yes.
IMP. (*in a voice shaken by passion, and still facing* DICK) Tell them you have lied.
DICK. (*very slowly*) I've lied—I beg your pardon.

(*Another long, tense silence, broken by a light laugh from* KARA.)

IMP. (*turns to her, imploringly*) Kara!

KARA. (*coldly*) Have you forgotten what I said to you to-day?

(*There is a pause, and, as the* IMP *sinks back heart-broken upon the sofa, she flings back her head haughtily and sweeps to the door, saying loudly.*)

KARA. My cloak, Babette. Show these gentlemen out. Jimmy, take me to my carriage. I will explain.

(HIRSCH *laughs, and she sweeps out of the room on his arm. The hall door shuts with a bang.*)

DICK. (*holding out his arms, pleadingly*) My boy, my boy!
IMP. (*facing him, says slowly and quietly*) Never again—you've killed it!

(*He turns from him and goes out of the house.* DICK *stands for a moment, motionless, heart-broken; then he repeats in a whisper, mechanically.*)

DICK. You've killed it! Why, since he was so high, I've—— Never again—he doesn't mean it—he—he can't mean it.

BAB. (*comes to him with his hat and cloak*) For Monsieur.

DICK. (*looks at her dazed, then realizes*) Yes—I forgot—Oh, yes. He didn't mean it. I—I will go after him—he didn't mean it—he didn't mean it!

(*He goes slowly out after the boy.* WALLIS *and* HUGHIE *turn to each other and lift their glasses meaningly.*)

HUGHIE. Chin-chin, old son! Quite a busy evening!

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

TIME.—*The same night—about an hour later.*

SCENE.—DICK'S *room in the Clement's Inn.* MRS. ERICSON *dozing in an easy chair*—PHYLLIS *working by her side. After a slight pause, she rises and goes to the window—draws the curtains a little and looks out.*

MRS. E. *sits up with a start*) I must have dozed, it must be very late.

PHYLL. Very late.

MRS. E. Oh, my dear—we can't sit up any more.

PHYLL. We must—he can't be much longer now, at least—you needn't, mother, dear—I must.

MRS. E. Well, anyhow if I do sit up, I'll do it lying down in my room, this low chair gives me cricks in my neck.

PHYLL. It'll be an awful blow to him.

MRS. E. Yes, dear, I'm afraid it will. What it is about young men that makes them go off and get married like that, I don't know. Are you going to stay here, or are you coming with me?

PHYLL. I'll stay here.

MRS. E. I couldn't keep my eyes open sitting up, perhaps it'll be better lying down. Oh, do lie down, too, dear, you look worn out.

PHYLL. I'm all right. We must be very kind to him when he comes, mother.

MRS. E. Yes, we will be—if I can keep awake.

(MRS. ERICSON *goes sleepily to her room—leaving* PHYLLIS *at the window.*)

PHYLL. Oh, what can it be that keeps him!

(*Footsteps heard outside—then the electric bell rings.*)

Here they are! (*she runs to hall door and opens it*)

(SIR HORACE, *the* DOCTOR *and* COL. GRAEME *come in.*)

Where's Dick?

WADDLES. Isn't he here?

COL. We thought he was here.

PHYLL. Hasn't he been with you?

COL. Yes!

PHYLL. (*looking from one to the other—observing their embarrassment*) What's happened?

(*They don't answer.*)

He had a letter from that woman this afternoon. I recognized the writing on the envelope. Are they married?

COL. Who?

PHYLL. The Imp and she.

(*The three look greatly surprised.*)

COL. You know—how did you know?

PHYLL. I knew days ago. The Imp told me—and—and—I got this letter this afternoon, saying that by the time I received it he'd be a married man.

WADDLES. Oh, why didn't you tell Dick?

PHYLL. I'd promised not to. He wanted to tell Dick himself. Besides, Dick must have known, because he got a note from the Imp's wife this afternoon.

COL. But unfortunately the note did not say a word about the marriage.

PHYLL. (*amazed*) Didn't say—I don't understand that. Would you mind telling me what's happened? I'm quite old enough to be told things. I'm not breaking my heart for the Imp. I gave him his freedom very willingly. Tell me — Dick is suffering, I know that. He's keeping everything from me. I want to help him —I must help him—tell me what's happened.

COL. I think we'd better.

DOCTOR. Ah, shure—I'm glad you're not breakin' your heart for the boy.

PHYLL. So am I. Tell me about Dick, please.

COL. Well—this lady that the Imp has married——

DOCTOR. Wasn't a desirable party at all—at all.

COL. And so Dick went to-night by appointment to —to buy her off.

PHYLL. Too late?

WADDLES. Too late.

DOCTOR. That's just the devil of it.

COL. And—and—the Imp and Dick have—well—they

haven't exactly quarreled—but the boy knows now that his marriage has been a mistake.

PHYLL. Already?

COL. I think the lady has transferred her affections to some one else.

PHYLL. But she only got married to-day.

WADDLES. Some ladies are a little fickle, Phyllis dear.

PHYLL. Something awful must have happened.

The three men nod.)

(*in a whisper*) What?

COL. We don't know—yet.

PHYLL. Oh, Dick—poor Dick!

WADDLES. If you'd seen him walk out of that place to-night, you'd have said poor Dick, indeed.

COL. You see Dick, knowing nothing of the marriage, proved to the boy—that the woman wasn't fit to be any man's wife.

DOCTOR. And all the time the two were married.

(*There is a long, disconsolate pause.*)

PHYLL. Where is he now—somewhere out there alone with it all. Oh, dear, oh, dear! (*she goes to the window and leaning against the curtains she has one quiet little sob all to herself*)

(*The three men look at each other—then the* DOCTOR *says in a whisper.*)

DOCTOR. It's Dick she loves, after all.

(*The other two look at his incredulously for a moment, then, as the idea takes root—the* COL. *gives a low whistle.*)

WADDLES. (*gasps*) You're right, you're right. Oh, what fools we've been!

DOCTOR. We've found the silver lining, boys, there'll be a new member in the firm.

COL. But, does Dick——

DOCTOR. (*breaking in with a smile*) Av course he does—shure, don't we all?

(*The three men draw a long breath and turn and look gently at the girl—she is still standing staring out into the night waiting for* DICK *to come.*)

(*tenderly*) When he comes in, ye'll try and comfort him—won't you, my dear?

PHYLL. Oh, if only I could.

SIR H. He'll be very lonely, Phyl.

DOCTOR. Ah, if there was only some sweet woman who loved him—who could take his tired head upon her heart and tell him not to grieve—that 'ud do him good, I'm thinkin'.

WADDLES. (*abruptly*) Is your mother up?

DOCTOR. (*rounds on him*) Ah, shure—what's the good of that?

WADDLES. My gracious, I didn't mean that. I was only thinking.

PHYLL. (*coming away from the window wearily*) It's very late, if you'd like anything to eat and drink—it's all on the table in the dining room.

WADDLES. That's what I meant, man, when I said——

PHYLL. (*suddenly listening*) Hush! (*a pause*) He's coming.

(*She goes up to door and listens.*)

DOCTOR. What did I tell you! She knows his step. Boys! I'm thinkin' this blow is the softest thing Masther Dick has ever sthruck.

PHYLL. Shall—shall we go into the dining room?

DOCTOR. (*a little astonished*) For why?

PHYLL. Perhaps he—he might like to be alone to-night—just to-night.

WADDLES. Well, I think p'raps four of us is too many, but—maybe—one.

DOCTOR.
AND
COLONEL.
Yes, yes!

(*They move hurriedly out.*)

WADDLES. (*to* PHYLLIS) You stay!

(*He goes out after the other two. The outer door is opened with a latch-key and* DICK *comes in wearily—he passes across the hall and into his own room. Throws his hat and coat on to a chair and stands for a moment lost in his thoughts. He doesn't see* PHYLLIS, *who is in an alcove of the window. After a bit, he goes to the desk, unlocks it, takes out the letter—*

and reads it through, then holding it tenderly, as if it were a living thing—he whispers.)

DICK. I did my best, old man, I did my best.

(PHYLLIS *comes in quietly—closing the door after her. She steals across to him and puts her hand tenderly on his shoulder.*)

Aren't you in bed?

PHYLL. No, dear.

DICK. You should be child, it's late.

PHYLL. Is it? (*then, with great tenderness, she slips her hand into his*) Oh, Dick, dear, you look so tired.

DICK. Do I?

PHYLL. You're not angry because I waited up? I knew you'd be tired, and I—I thought you might be lonely. So—so—I wanted to be with you, if you'd let me. I know about it all, Dick—the marriage—and—the rest.

DICK. You know?

PHYLL. The Trinity told me.

DICK. (*a great pity comes over him for her*) I did it for the best, dear. I'm very sorry.

PHYLL. Don't be sorry for me, Dick. He told me days ago about her, and I was glad he didn't love me—because—I didn't love him either.

DICK. You didn't?

PHYLL. No! Where is he?

DICK. I don't know. (*then, with a long, indrawn sob, he sinks into the chair by the table and buries his head on his hands*) Ih, my boy—my boy!

PHYLL. Oh, don't, Dick, don't.

DICK. I tried my best to save him, I did, indeed.

PHYLL. I know you did, he knows you did.

DICK. He doesn't, he hates me—how can he help it, he hates me—oh, my boy, my boy!

PHYLL. Dick!

DICK. (*rising and moving from her*) Don't, dear, please don't. Leave me alone, I—I'd sooner be alone, just now.

(*And* PHYLLIS, *understanding, goes quietly away. He has moved towards the mantelpiece and bowed his head, there is a long silence, he stands there alone in his grief.*)

Be father—mother—all to him—and this is what I've done!

(*The hall door is heard to open and shut again softly,* DICK *is heedless of it, then the door of his room opens and the* IMP *comes in.* DICK, *at the sound, looks up and sees him. There is a pause.*)

DICK. (*gently*) You have come back?

IMP. (*with a laugh*) Are you surprised?

DICK. Yes.

IMP. (*bitterly*) When a man arranges to lie away a woman's reputation to her husband, he shouldn't be surprised if the husband has a word to say on the subject.

(DICK *looks at him, then says slowly.*)

DICK. I knew nothing of the marriage. What I did, I did for your sake.

IMP. Thank you very much.

DICK. I don't think you were wise to come here to-night—we—we can't see things clearly yet. You'd better go; come back to-morrow, perhaps then you will be able to understand.

IMP. Oh, I quite understand now. I've learnt my lesson pretty thoroughly, thanks to you all. A woman, even, a man's wife, is a thing to be bought and sold. If you've taught me nothing else, Dick, you've taught me that.

DICK. I've never taught you anything that wasn't true. No woman worthy of the name is to be bought.

IMP. Ah, I know 'em now—you don't. Who was the chap who said every woman was at heart a wrong 'un? He knew life. It's only the accident of birth and circumstances. Why, I daresay Phyllis——

DICK. (*sternly*) Stop there! (*then very quietly*) You'd better go, we are neither of us in a fit state to talk this matter over. We'd say what we didn't mean, and—and I might get angry with you. (*a pause*) I have asked your pardon for my share in this; at the same time, I must ask you to remember that I did what I thought was right.

IMP. Our views of right and wrong differ.

DICK. (*gently*) They may to-night. I'm sure they won't to-morrow. (*he goes to the door and opens it*)

IMP. (*hotly*) I'm not going yet. There's a good deal I've got to say to you.

DICK. And a good deal I've got to say to you, but not to-night.

IMP. (*raising his voice*) I will——

DICK. Hush! I said not to-night.

IMP. (*stamping*) I will know the truth of this damned conspiracy against me.

DICK. Stop!

IMP. It has been a conspiracy, and you know it. What were you all at the club for?

DICK. (*quietly*) I shall expect you in the morning.

IMP. (*getting beyond himself, faces* DICK *in a rage*) Tell me now.

DICK. I shall expect you in the morning.

IMP. (*lifting his hand to strike*) You—you——

(DICK *seizes his arm and holds him for an instant as in a vice, then lets him go, and says gently.*)

DICK. That would have been a pity, wouldn't it?

(*A long pause, then he takes the letter.*)

This is your father's letter to me, written when he lay dying, and you were a little child; in it he asks me to try and take his place. I have tried—you are of age now—you need me no longer. (*and he tears the letter into two pieces*)

(*The* IMP *is sitting upon the sofa, his head buried in his hands. A knock is heard at the outside door.*)

Who's that?

(DICK *goes and opens the door. A* CABMAN *is seen outside.*)

CABMAN. (*enquiringly*) Richard Carewe?

DICK. Yes.

CABMAN. Lady told me to deliver this note, most spechul.

(DICK *takes it and fumbles in his pockets for a coin, hasn't got one. He turns to the* IMP.)

DICK. Got a couple of shillings?

IMP. Yes.

(*He hands* DICK *the coins, who, in his turn, hands them*

to the CABMAN, *who disappears, saying "Thank ye, sir."* DICK *closes the door and comes down to fireplace, opening the letter as he comes. He reads a little, then looks up at the* IMP, *who rises quickly, guessing intuitively.*)

IMP. It's from her.

DICK. Yes.

IMP. You can read it out. I'm not afraid—she can't write harder things than she said.

DICK. "I have learnt from Mr. Hirsch that you are the young man's guardian, so I see now the reason of our compact. I am sorry you were too late, for his, for my own, and for your sake. However, don't worry, your young friend will have no difficulty in obtaining his freedom. I return your cheque for two reasons; one is, I'm sure Hirsch wouldn't approve of my receiving such a present even from my husband's guardian, the other is I don't want you to think you are the only fool in the world. I'll send you some roses from Monte Carlo."

(*A pause, he looks at the* IMP, *who laughs and goes up into the window, where he stands staring into the darkness. Then he speaks without turning.*)

IMP. When I told her that I should kill him, she laughed and said, "Very well; but when you are hanged, there'll be nobody left to deal with his successors"; that seemed logical, so I came away and left him to eat his supper.

DICK. (*amazed*) You saw them?

IMP. (*nods*) Just left 'em—they're together now.

DICK. (*going quickly to him*) Oh, my poor old boy.

IMP. I—I can't help laughing. My position is so very ridiculous. (*he rises wearily*) I—I'll go now.

DICK. Where are you staying?

IMP. Metropole. Good-night.

DICK. Good-night.

(*The* IMP *goes slowly to the door, then turns to* DICK *and says huskily.*)

IMP. You—you might ask me to stay here.

DICK. (*gladly*) Would you?

IMP. Oh, Dick! (*and he breaks down utterly as* DICK, *deeply moved, catches him in his arms*)

DICK. (*half laughing, half sobbing*) Come, come,

it'll all dry straight, we will work it through together, old man, shoulder to shoulder, as we used to be.

IMP. All that I've said, just now, I didn't mean it, I didn't, indeed. I've been a brute to you, Dick, but I didn't mean to be.

DICK. I know, old man—bless you, I know. You had to work it off on somebody, and I was nearest.

IMP. (*passionately*) Dick—Dick! I'd like to get out of this country, just a bit. I must, I must—can't I go? There's always a war somewhere—I'd like to fight.

DICK. Why not? Get along out and show 'em you're your father's boy, our boy. Then come back all over Victoria crosses and things, and—and the Trinity shall entertain you at a banquet. That's right, boy, buck up. The world's a damned hard fight, you've had the first knock, a stiff 'un, right under the jaw, but you're up again, old son, and the fight is yours to win, if you only choose.

IMP. I choose.

(*And* DICK *wrings his outstretched hand.*)

DICK. (*cheerily*) Good man! Get along to bed, old son, you're dog tired, we'll think of the future in the morning

(*And the* IMP *goes out.*)

DICK. He's true grit, every inch of him. (*then suddenly*) Here, here, I tore up his father's letter. I was a fool. (*he picks up one piece*) It's all right, Charlie, old man, I'll be able to face you yet. (*he picks up the other piece*) Come here. Come here! Get back into your place—I've been a fool!

(*And he puts the torn pieces back into his drawer as* PHYLLIS *comes in.*)

PHYLL. (*comes in quickly*) He's back. I heard him go into his room.

DICK. Yes, he's back.

PHYLL. Poor old Imp.

DICK. Thank goodness he's got the pluck to take it like this. God knows it may be for the best after all. (*then he turns and looks at* PHYLLIS) Hullo! why—why—why—I can't have my little girl looking like this

—black shadows under her eyes, this won't do—you're the tired one now.

PHYLL. (*smiling sadly*) No, I'm not. I'm only tired for you. I know how you must feel about all this, and somehow I don't seem to be able to help you a bit.

DICK. (*stroking her hair softly*) Yes, you do, dear, you help me all the time.

PHYLL. (*moving a little from him*) Oh, I wish I could think I did. But (*cheerfully*) it's all right. The Imp's come back. And the Trinity is in the dining room having whiskies and sodas, so as you've got all you want, you'd like to go to bed.

DICK. No, I shouldn't, but it's getting very late.

(PHYLLIS *turns on her heel and goes to the door.*)

(*he calls her*) Phyllis, it—it was very sweet of you to wait up for me, dear. Good-night.

PHYLL. Good-night.

(*She again goes to the door—again he calls her softly.*)

DICK. Phyllis!

PHYLL. (*turning*) What? (*a pause*)

DICK. Nothing, I—I think you'd better go to bed, dear.

PHYLL. You were going to say something.

DICK. No, no——

(*She turns away—he stands watching her, then says quickly.*)

You're quite sure you never— (*he stops, there is a pause—she looks at him and then away*)

PHYLL. I was never in love with him, if that's what you mean.

DICK. You never were—really? (*gladly*)

PHYLL. Never was, really—really.

DICK. (*after a pause*) Ah, well, it's only postponing the evil day. He's gone—you'll be the next to go, but you've been fairly happy while you've been here, haven't you, dear?

PHYLL. I've been very happy, Dick.

DICK. (*with a gasp*) I wonder— (*he stops again*)

PHYLL. (*coming a little nearer to him*) What do you wonder?

DICK. (*backing a little*) Nothing. You really ought to go to bed, dear.

PHYLL. I'm going.

DICK. I suppose what you said the other day about your mother—well, I suppose you'll be going altogether soon.

PHYLL. (*gravely*) I don't think I was quite just about mother the other day—she didn't say those things, really.

DICK. Didn't she? Then, why——

PHYLL. (*slowly*) Oh, because I was in a silly mood —you would keep on saying things to me about the Imp and how happy I ought to be, and all that, and of course I wasn't a bit happy. I'm much hapier now.

DICK. Now?

PHYLL. Well, because now he's not going to marry me, so I needn't marry him. I'm free now, Dick.

DICK. Oh, I wish I was ten years younger.

PHYLL. I don't.

DICK. (*eagerly*) Don't you? (*he moves to her*) Oh, Phyllis!

(*She meets his eye and he backs off again.*)

You really ought to go to bed, dear, it's quite late.

PHYLL. Does it matter for once?

DICK. (*gathering courage*) Phyllis, I—I—oh, I'm a fool, don't laugh at me.

PHYLL. I haven't.

DICK. I—I—oh, Phyllis, I've never dared to tell anyone. I've never dared to tell myself—much less you.

(*A pause.*)

PHYLL. What, Dick?

DICK. That—that—oh, my dear, it's striking two—what would your mother say?

PHYLL. (*very matter of factly*) You're quite right, Dick, dear, it is very late. Good-night. The Trinity are in the dining room, I'm keeping you from them. Good-night.

(*She goes to door.*)

DICK. Don't go just yet.

(*She comes back.*)

DICK. I'm not usually such a fool—but somehow this seems so fearfully serious. I—I—you're a young girl.

I'm forty. It isn't fair, is it? I mean, I daresay, you would out of the kindness of your heart, but—but—No, I'm a fool, everything's better as it is. Good-night, dear.

(*He turns from her and goes to the table—she stands looking at him for a moment, then says softly.*)

PHYLL. You don't mean to say good-night, Dick, like that. Good-night. (*she comes to him with her hands outstretched—their eyes meet, the touch of her hands conquers him*)

DICK. I must tell you— (*a long pause, and he says in a whisper almost*) I love you!

PHYLL. (*simply*) I love you, too, Dick.

DICK. You love me!

PHYLL. I've always loved you, but you didn't seem to care.

DICK. (*dazed*) You love me!

PHYLL. I love you.

(*There is a silence, and then he kisses her—there is another silence—then he says with a long sigh.*)

DICK. I thought everything had ended. Everything is just beginning—You love me—say it again.

PHYLL. Need I?

DICK. Yes, say it again.

PHYLL. I love you.

DICK. You love me.

(*A long pause—he kisses her—and whispers.*)

Again!

PHYLL. Again and always, I love you.

DICK. Then what's the matter with anything?

PHYLL. Nothing.

DICK. (*in a hushed whisper*) Nobody must ever know.

PHYLL. Why not?

DICK. I don't know—but—but—oh, they mustn't—say it again.

PHYLL. Tell everybody—are you ashamed of me?

DICK. Ashamed! Here—hi! No, no, before they come, say it again—just in a whisper. I love you, of it's the most beautiful thing I've ever heard. Phyllis, Phyllis, where have I been hiding myself all these years? you've opened out life to me.

PHYLL. (*whispers*) I love you,

DICK. But—but oh, I'm forty, dear.
PHYLL. I love you.
DICK. I'm—I'm an old bachelor.
PHYLL. I love you.
DICK. (*with a cry of delight*) Don't whisper it, shout it. We love eacvh other, and we're going to be married. Let's tell 'em, let's tell 'em. Waddles, Miles, Doctor—what are they doing? How shall I tell 'em?
PHYLL. It's very easy.
DICK. (*ruefully*) Is it? Here, I've called 'em, you tell 'em—that's fair.

(WADDLES, *the* DOCTOR, *and the* SOLDIER-MAN *enter hurriedly.*)

THE THREE. Old man——
DICK. The Imp's come home—and—and we're none of us to worry, because he's going to be a man.
THE THREE. Oh! (*vaguely*)
DICK. And—and—Phyllis has got something to say to you.

(*The three men, with instant comprehension, wheel round to* PHYLLIS.)

COLONEL. (*eagerly*) Is it all right?
PHYLL. (*smiling*) Yes.
COLONEL. Oh, my dear! (*and he takes her hands and kisses her fervently*) It's our right.

(*He hands her to the* DOCTOR, *who does the same and hands her to* WADDLES, *who follows suit.*)

THE THREE. Good luck to you—it—it—it's splendid.
DICK. (*taking her*) Yes, isn't it? Splendid.
OMNES. Kiss her, kiss her!
DICK. I'm not afraid. I—I did it all by myself just now.

(*He kisses her.*)

WADDLES. Thank goodness, it isn't a quadrity any longer—it's a quantity.
OMNES. It is—it is!
WADDLES. With a power to increase our number.

CURTAIN.

This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.

23497.65.6.7
When we were twenty-one ;
Widener Library
002966343
3 2044 086 860 525